

# CHEMICAL SAFETY

*Chemical safety is everyone's responsibility. Protect yourself, your workplace and your employees.*

Employers are responsible for ensuring the safe use of chemicals in their workplace. The responsibilities of the employer are defined in **WHMIS** (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System).



**WHMIS** is a Canada-wide system designed to give employers and workers information about hazardous materials used in the workplace.

In Ontario, there are two pieces of provincial legislation related to chemical safety in the workplace which are administered by the Ministry of Labour:

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act,
- The WHMIS Regulation, Ontario Regulation 860

## What are your duties as an employer?

As an employer in charge of a workplace where hazardous chemicals are used you have three duties under WHMIS:

### 1. Ensure that controlled products are labelled or identified

#### Supplier Labels

It is the responsibility of the supplier of the chemical to create and apply the label to the container prior to shipping them. Items that must be present on a supplier label include:

- Product name
- Supplier name
- Statement of MSDS (proof of an MSDS sheet with more information)
- Appropriate hazard symbol
- Risk phrases (warnings about potential health risks)
- Pre-cautionary measures
- First aid measures

Chemical containers should be inspected upon receipt to ensure that they are properly labelled with the prescribed supplier label.



#### Workplace Labels

A workplace label is a label produced by the workplace and would be used when the product is being transferred from its original supplier container to a different one. It is also used when the supplier label is illegible, accidentally removed or if the product is produced in the workplace.

The workplace label must contain the following information:

- the identity of the product;
- information for the safe handling of the product; and
- a statement that a material safety data sheet, if supplied or produced, is available.

### 2. Obtain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for chemicals

Material Safety Data Sheets are technical documents produced by the supplier/manufacturer of chemicals that provides specific hazard information, safe handling information, and emergency procedures for a chemical. When purchasing chemicals, the most up to date version of the MSDS (no older than three years) should be requested and maintained in a location accessible to the employees using the chemicals, for example in a marked binder in the lunchroom or in the area where the chemicals are stored.

If you are unable to obtain an MSDS you are allowed to store, but not use the chemical until one can be obtained from the supplier.

### 3. Educate the Worker

It is the responsibility of the employer to provide all of the information and instruction to all workers who work with, or near chemicals.

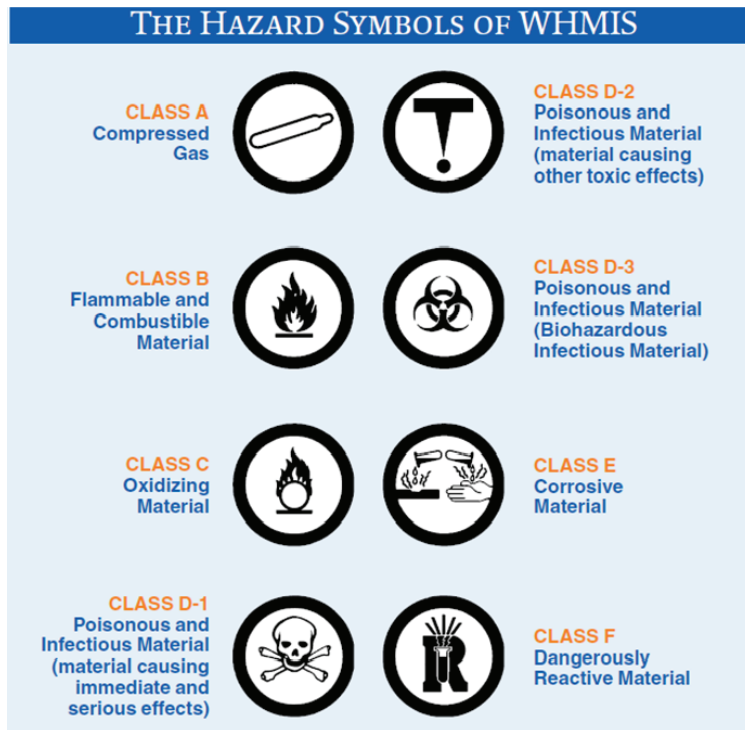
This means that the employer must provide training to anyone who:

- stores the chemicals;
- handles the chemicals;
- uses the chemicals;
- disposes of the chemicals;
- anyone who immediately supervises another worker who performs the above duties;
- and anyone whose health and safety could be at risk during storage, handling, uses or disposes a chemical; during maintenance activities; or during emergencies such as spills.

Ensure that all training is documented with date of training, employee name and signature as well as the name and signature of the trainer. Keep these training records on file for the length of the employee's employment.

Training materials must be reviewed at least once a year, or more often if new information on a chemical becomes available, or if workplace conditions change.

The review is intended to identify whether worker retraining and updating of the education program are necessary.



### *Using Chemicals*

Chemicals should only be handled, dispensed and used by employees who are trained in their use and the associated hazards.

Check the MSDS for the appropriate personal protective equipment to be worn by employees handling chemicals.

Chemicals should be dispensed in clean, dry, dedicated containers and clearly identified with a workplace label.

Chemicals should not be dispensed into a container that has been used for another chemical as this may cause a chemical reaction resulting in explosion.

Before mixing any chemicals, refer to the chemical's MSDS's or read the label on the container.

For more information, resources, or help with your program please contact:

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