

Material Safety Data Sheets: Getting Started

What is a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?

An MSDS is a document that contains information on the potential health effects of exposure to chemicals or other potentially dangerous substances, and on safe working procedures that workers/users should adhere to when handling chemical products.

General information about MSDSs is available at: www.ilpi.com/msds/faq/index.html.

Typically, MSDSs contain the following information:

- ⇒ Product Identification
- ⇒ Composition and Information on Ingredients
- ⇒ Physical and Chemical Properties
- ⇒ Hazard Identification
- ⇒ First Aid Measures
- ⇒ Toxicological and Ecological Information
- ⇒ Health Effects
- ⇒ Stability and Reactivity
- ⇒ Storage and Disposal
- ⇒ Personal Protection

MSDSs are available from the manufacturer(s) or on-line.



What is required for EnviroStars?

The EnviroStars program requires you to maintain an MSDS file for all hazardous chemicals stored at your site. State and Federal regulations also require businesses that have employees maintain complete and up-to-date MSDS files. Hazardous chemicals are labeled “Poison, Danger, Warning, or Caution” and include products that are reactive, corrosive, toxic/poisonous, flammable and/or explosive.

Why is this Important?

Providing appropriate notification to employees about the hazardous products they are handling may help protect a business owner from potential liability under certain circumstances. Increasing employees’ awareness of hazardous chemical properties and their use has benefits for worker health and safety, and environmental protection. Employee familiarity with MSDS information can help with:

- * spill cleanup
- * first-aid and other emergency response
- * proper use, storage and disposal
- * best product selection

How do I get started?

You can get started with a few options: You can either put together a system yourself, hire a service to do it for you or contact the Labor and Industries Free Safety Consultation Service.

If you have employees who do not read English, ask your supplier for translated MSDSs or refer to section "E. MSDS translation services" below.

A. Doing it Yourself

1. Make an inventory of all the hazardous products stored at your facility. Use an online resource to print out individual sheets or ask vendors for sheets when you purchase their products. You can also contact your vendors and have them send you missing MSDSs. (Specific areas to look for hazardous substances are described below).
2. Create a clearly labeled file that contains all MSDSs arranged in a logical format (alphabetical or by product type or usage).
3. Make sure all employees know where the file is located and instruct them on how to use it.

B. Using an MSDS Management Service

For a fee, some services such as an MSDS website, can work with you to create a custom data base of all MSDSs. They can usually provide a way to update the file as products change or as part of a periodic review of your needs. You can search the internet using "msds management service" as the search words to find management services links.

C. Hiring a Private Health & Safety Consultant

Look in the Yellow Pages under "Industrial Hygiene Consultants" or "Occupational Health and Safety".

D. Contacting the Washington State Labor and Industries - Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) - Safety and Health Consultation Service

At your request, a DOSH consultant will provide a confidential, no-charge review of your employee safety and accident prevention programs. You will be offered suggestions that could help prevent injuries and illnesses and even save you money on your industrial insurance costs. See www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Assistance/Consultation.

E. MSDS Translation Services

If needed, your MSDSs can be translated into a variety of languages. Samples of on-line services include: www.msds.com, www.ilpi.com/msds, www.usp.org/products/MSDS, and www.msdonline.com. Most MSDS translation services require a membership or service fee.

Where are Hazardous Materials or Chemicals Found on My Site?

Do a thorough walk-through of your facility and site. Check storage areas, shelves, sheds, warehouses, and work areas. Start an inventory, you may be surprised at what you find. Can you minimize the number of different products being used or the amount of a specific product? Can you find less hazardous products to use that don't require special storage, handling and disposal?

Examples of what you may find....

Fuels and oils:

Motor oil, gasoline, diesel.

Paints and coatings:

Oil-based paints or stains, sealers, thinners, paint removers, and epoxies.

Cleaners:

Products containing chlorine bleach, ammonia, alcohol, solvents, and hexane.

Office products:

Copier supplies/toners, "white out", computer monitors, etc.

Other:

Antifreeze, batteries (especially those containing cadmium or lead), fluorescent bulbs and ballasts.

How do I dispose of these Hazardous Wastes?

Call the Business Waste Line at (206) 263-8899 or visit www.lhwmp.org/home/ for disposal information and options.

Resources...

EnviroStars:

www.envirostars.org

The Business Waste Line

(206) 263-8899

www.lhwmp.org/home/

Example MSDS sites:

www.msds.com

www.MSDSONline.com

www.msdssearch.com

www.ilpi.com/msds/faq/index.html



**Local Hazardous Waste
Management Program
In King County, Washington**

