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Compensation Insurance and workplace safety



Provided by Mike Felix
Association Coordinator

Handle with Care

Take time to learn hazardous material labels, warnings

Many businesses generate wastes that are considered hazardous or harmful to human health or the environment because they are flammable, corrosive, reactive, or toxic.

Because of the potential for harm from these materials, workers must remain aware of the safety hazards and proper handling and disposal procedures in order to protect the environment, themselves and to comply with state and federal regulations.

Workers who generate or who handle hazardous waste need to undergo safety training, which includes the potential hazards, proper handling, collection, labeling, and storage, as well as transportation and final disposal or treatment.

In addition, workers should be trained on emergency procedures and accidental spill response. Warning labels on hazardous material containers should provide much of the information you need to know to use the material safely. While you can get the same information (and more) from a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), only a warning label can tell you exactly which chemical is inside a particular container.

The MSDS is a document that contains information on the chemical make-up, use, storage, handling, emergency procedures and potential health effects related to a hazardous material. The material manufacturer prepares the MSDSs, which form the cornerstone of the respective standard.

The Hazard Communication standard requires employers to:

- Maintain an inventory of hazardous materials
- Provide employees training on the potential hazards associated with a material
- Obtain and maintain MSDSs for each material onsite
- Establish proper methods and types of labels
- Inform contractors of the hazards to which their employees in the work area may be exposed.

Labels on containers serve as the alert that there may be hazards associated with using the material found in the container. Understanding these labels helps workers handle and use the material properly. Making sure that hazardous materials are labeled is a responsibility all employees must share. If you find an unlabeled hazardous material container with no label or a torn or unreadable label, tell your supervisor immediately.

And remember, NEVER use or handle hazardous material until you know for sure what it is!

The most important information on the container's warning label is the word that indicates how hazardous the material is. There are three levels:

- Danger, which means it is the most hazardous kind of material
- Warning, which means it is less hazardous than Danger, but more hazardous than Caution
- Caution, which is the least hazardous rating, but the material still is hazardous

If you would like more information on workplace safety please contact your SCF Association Coordinator.

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