

TOOLBOX TALK

Hazard Communication

WHY THIS MATTERS

Over 43 million U.S. workers are exposed to hazardous chemicals (OSHA). Chemical hazards contribute to roughly 15% of all workplace injuries and fatalities. HazCom is the #2 most cited OSHA violation. Knowing the chemicals you work with can save your life.

43M+

U.S. workers exposed to hazardous chemicals

#2

Most cited OSHA violation (HazCom)

100%

Chemical injuries are preventable

5 Rules of Hazard Communication

Your right to know — understand the chemicals you work with every day:

1

READ THE LABEL BEFORE YOU USE IT

Every chemical container must have a GHS label with product name, hazard pictograms, signal word, and precautions.

2

KNOW HOW TO READ AN SDS

Safety Data Sheets have 16 sections. Sections 2, 4, and 8 are critical: hazards, first aid, and PPE required.

3

NEVER USE UNLABELED CHEMICALS

If the container has no label or a damaged label — STOP. Do not use it. Report it to your supervisor.

4

WEAR THE REQUIRED PPE

The SDS tells you exactly what protection is needed: gloves, goggles, respirator, or chemical suit. Wear it.

5

KNOW WHAT TO DO IN A SPILL OR EXPOSURE

Read Section 6 (spill response) and Section 4 (first aid) of the SDS BEFORE an incident happens.

HazCom Checklist

- Are all chemical containers properly labeled with GHS labels?
- Are Safety Data Sheets available and accessible for every chemical on site?
- Have all workers received HazCom training for the chemicals they use?
- Is the written Hazard Communication Program up to date?
- Do workers know where to find SDSs and emergency procedures?

The 9 GHS Pictograms — Know What They Mean

Flame

Flammable liquids, gases, aerosols, solids. Keep away from heat, sparks, and open flames.

Exploding bomb

Explosives, self-reactive substances. May explode if heated. Handle with extreme care.

Skull & crossbones

Acute toxicity — fatal or toxic if swallowed, inhaled, or absorbed through skin.

Corrosion

Causes severe skin burns and serious eye damage. Corrodes metals. Wear full protection.

Health hazard

Carcinogen, respiratory sensitizer, reproductive toxicity, organ damage. Long-term health effects.

Exclamation mark

Irritant, skin sensitizer, narcotic effects, respiratory irritant. Less severe health hazard.

Common Mistakes That Cause Chemical Injuries

- ✗ Using a chemical without reading the label — "I've used this before" doesn't mean you know the hazards
- ✗ Transferring chemicals to unlabeled containers — secondary containers MUST be labeled
- ✗ Mixing chemicals without checking compatibility — mixing bleach and ammonia creates toxic gas
- ✗ Not wearing the PPE listed on the SDS — "it's just a quick job" leads to burns and exposure
- ✗ Not knowing where SDSs are kept — in an emergency, you need this information in seconds

Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Label, SDS, Training — the 3 pillars of HazCom. If any one is missing, you're not protected
- ✓ When in doubt, check the SDS — it has everything you need: hazards, PPE, first aid, spill response
- ✓ Secondary containers need labels too — even a spray bottle filled from a bulk container
- ✓ Know your emergency eyewash and shower locations — chemical burns require 15 minutes of flushing
- ✓ Ask questions — if you don't understand a label or SDS, ask your supervisor before using the chemical

Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. What hazardous chemicals are we using on site today?
2. Can everyone locate the SDSs for those chemicals right now?
3. Are all containers — including secondary containers — properly labeled?
4. Do you know the first aid steps if a chemical gets in your eyes or on your skin?
5. When was your last HazCom training update?

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: _____ Supervisor: _____

Project: _____ Location: _____