

GHS SAFETY DATA SHEETS IN CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENTS

COURSE OUTLINE

- **When you don't know enough about a material that you're working with or its hazards, there is a greater chance that you will injure yourself or your coworkers.**
 - And if there is a spill or accidental exposure, knowing the emergency procedures that you should follow can be the difference between a speedy recovery and a life-altering injury.
- **For any material that you work with you should know...**
 - Exactly what the material is and what its hazards are.
 - What procedures you should follow when handling and storing it.
 - What you should do if there's an emergency involving the material.
- **Conveniently, you can find all this information and more in one place.**
 - It's the material's Safety Data Sheet (SDS).
- **Under OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, HAZMAT producers and distributors are required to provide Safety Data Sheets for each of their products.**
- **The "Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals dictates...**
 - The information that Safety Data Sheets contain.
 - The way they present that information.
- **This system, which is called "GHS" for short, was established by the United Nations.**
 - It helps people anywhere in the world get accurate information about hazardous materials regardless of what language they speak.
- **It accomplishes this by standardizing...**
 - How materials are classified.
 - How their hazards and safety precautions are described.
 - How those facts are conveyed.
 - How pictograms are used to indicate a material's hazards.

- **GHS Safety Data Sheets organize HAZMAT information about a material into 16 numbered sections, which always appear in the same order.**
 - Data that's likely to be needed in a hurry, such as a material's name, composition, hazards, safety precautions as well as emergency procedures, is presented in the first six sections.
 - Information on safe handling and storage procedures is located in the middle of the SDS, followed by more specialized, technical information toward the end.
- **All of the data in GHS Safety Data Sheets is presented using clear, non-technical language and standard phrasing.**
 - This is so it's easy for people who work with HAZMATs to get the information they need... when they need it!
- **Jobsites that use or handle hazardous materials should keep their SDSs in a central location.**
 - That way, all workers have easy access to them.
 - In some cases, jobsites may store Safety Data Sheets in a way that covers groups of hazardous chemicals that are used in a work area or a “process”.
- **When you are around HAZMATs on the job, you want to be able to access the information about how to work with them safely quickly and easily.**
 - So GHS Safety Data Sheets follow a “first things first” approach to presenting HAZMAT information.
 - That makes it easy to find and use, even when you're in a hurry.
- **The first three sections of an SDS answer the questions...**
 - What is this material?
 - What are its hazards?
- **Section 1 is “Product Identification”. This includes...**
 - A chemical's “official” name, which the GHS calls the “product identifier”.
 - Any other chemical or trade names by which the substance is known.
 - The name and contact information of the company that supplied the material.
 - A 24-hour emergency telephone number.

- **Section 2, “Hazard Identification”, provides information on a material's hazards, including its...**
 - “Hazard Classification” (such as “flammable solid”).
 - “Hazard Statement” (such as "harmful if inhaled").
 - Its “Signal Word” (which will be either "Warning" or "Danger", depending on how hazardous the substance is).
 - “Pictogram” with symbols depicting its hazards.
- **Section 2 also describes safety precautions that should be used while you’re working with the material, such as...**
 - "Keep away from heat".
 - "Do not breathe vapor".
 - "Wear protective gloves".
- **As you can see, one objective of the GHS system is to make HAZMAT information as "user-friendly" as possible, by presenting it in plain language.**
- **The third section of a GHS Safety Data Sheet provides technical details about a material's composition.**
 - This includes information about any other chemicals that it contains.
 - This can be particularly important when a substance is a mixture of a number of ingredients.
- **One thing to note is that some manufacturers want to avoid listing the exact quantities of their ingredients, to protect their “trade secrets”.**
 - So OSHA allows manufacturers to provide a “prescriptive range” in Section 3 for the quantities of the ingredients that make up the material.
 - This helps companies protect their product formulations while still making sure workers are getting the information that they need to work with it safely.
- **OSHA helps them with this by providing a list of ranges they can use, such as...**
 - 0.1%-1%
 - 5%-10%
 - 30%-60%
 - 80%-100%
 - As well as narrower ranges OSHA has developed.
- **Manufacturers can also use their own ranges, as long as they are more narrow than those that are on OSHA’s list.**

- **Section 3 also includes:**
 - The material's common name and any synonyms it has.
 - Its Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) number.
 - Any other unique identifiers.
- **No one wants to think that they will be involved in a HAZMAT emergency.**
 - But the fact is, they do happen.
 - Being prepared is the best way to combat them and control the damage that can result.
- **That's why sections 4, 5 and 6 of a GHS Safety Data Sheet contain information on how to handle different types of HAZMAT emergencies for the material.**
 - For example, if someone has been exposed to a hazardous material, you should turn to Section 4 for information on first aid measures.
- **The directions are organized according to how the victim was exposed.**
 - This could be from inhaling the substance, swallowing it, or through skin contact.
 - It will also tell you whether the victim will require emergency medical assistance.
- **If a HAZMAT is involved in a fire, Section 5 of its SDS provides detailed information on the firefighting measures that should be used with it.**
 - This includes what extinguishing agents are appropriate for the substance, and which are not.
 - It also offers information regarding any new hazards that the material can create when it burns, such as toxic smoke.
- **Lastly, Section 5 describes the precautions, procedures and protective equipment that professional firefighters should use when extinguishing a fire that involves the HAZMAT.**
- **When a HAZMAT is spilled or leaked, you'll want to go to Section 6 of its GHS Safety Data Sheet, which discusses "accidental release measures".**
 - In addition to emergency procedures and the safety precautions that should be taken in the event of a spill or leak, this section describes the methods, materials and equipment that should be used to contain and clean up the substance.

- **The instructions in this section can include things such as...**
 - "Ventilate the area".
 - "Wear protective eyewear, gloves and clothing".
 - "Dam and absorb spillage with sand, earth or other non-combustible materials".
- **To provide easy access to the data you need most urgently, GHS Safety Data Sheets present HAZMAT information in "priority" order.**
 - The first six sections of an SDS tell you what you'll want to know in a crisis, when every second counts.
- **The best way to “steer clear” of HAZMAT injuries is by preventing emergencies from happening in the first place.**
 - So the information in SDS sections 7-10 describes the safe handling practices that can help you to avoid HAZMAT exposure incidents and spills.
- **For instance, section 7 is titled “Handling and Storage”, and includes...**
 - The precautions that you should take when working with a substance.
 - The conditions that it requires to be stored safely.
- **This section can include warnings such as...**
 - "Avoid contact with skin, eyes and clothing".
 - "Keep away from ignition sources".
 - "Store in a cool location".
 - "Keep away from combustible material".
- **Section 8 is titled “Exposure Controls and Personal Protection”.**
 - It provides details about engineering controls and personal protective equipment (PPE) that you should use when you’re working with a material.
- **"Engineering Controls" are mechanical safety devices that are incorporated into a jobsite to help prevent HAZMAT exposure.**
 - They can include things like ventilation systems, gas detectors, safety showers and eye wash stations.

- **The personal protective equipment information may state that working with some materials might mean you have to wear PPE such as...**
 - Rubber gloves.
 - Goggles.
 - Face shields.
 - A respirator.
- **Section 8 of an SDS also specifies how much exposure to a material is safe and at what level it becomes dangerous.**
 - These benchmarks are known as Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) and Threshold Limit Values (TLVs).
- **Section 9 of an SDS lists a material's physical and chemical properties.**
 - Some of this information, such as what the substance looks and smells like, can help employees who are unfamiliar with a material tell whether an accidental release has occurred.
- **Other data in this section is there to help safety specialists create the controls and procedures that allow employees to work with the substance safely, including...**
 - The temperature at which a material melts or boils.
 - Its flashpoint.
- **Section 10 of an SDS contains information on a material's stability and reactivity, which can be very important in ensuring that the material is handled safely.**
 - Substances that are unstable or highly reactive may explode or undergo uncontrolled chemical reactions under certain conditions, or when they are combined with other incompatible chemicals.
- **Most people who use GHS Safety Data Sheets want HAZMAT information that is “user-friendly” and is presented in clear, non-technical language.**
 - But other SDS users, including supervisors and environmental managers... need to know specific technical details about a material.
- **To find these, they can look in Sections 11 through 16 of an SDS.**
 - For instance, Section 11, “Toxicological Information”, focuses on the adverse effects that a hazardous substance can have on living things.

- **This data includes...**
 - How toxic a substance is.
 - How it can get into the body.
 - The symptoms of exposure.
 - The acute and chronic effects that it can have... including its potential to cause cancer.
- **Section 12, “Ecological Information”, discusses the environmental impact a chemical can have if it leaks or spills. It describes...**
 - How the material behaves when it is released into the earth, air and water.
 - How long it can remain in these elements.
 - What effects it can have on plants, wildlife and other aspects of the environment.
- **Section 13, “Disposal Considerations”, explains how a material should be cleaned up, as well as the precautions that should be taken when disposing of it.**
 - For example, if a material is flammable it might need to be cleaned up using "non-sparking" tools.
- **Section 14, “Transport Information”, provides data that is required when a material is being transported, including its...**
 - Proper name.
 - UN number.
 - Hazard categories.
 - Safety precautions.
- **Section 15 is titled “Regulatory Information”.**
 - It lists any additional safety, health, and environmental regulations that apply to a product that have not been listed anywhere else on the SDS.
- **Section 16, “Other Information”, contains data about a substance that doesn't fit into any of the previous sections, as well as specific information on how and when the SDS itself was prepared and revised.**

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard protects employees’ “right-to-know” about the HAZMATs they work with. One of its main components is the creation and use of Safety Data Sheets.**
- **Workers can use Safety Data Sheets to learn about a material’s characteristics, how to work with it safely and what to do in an emergency involving it.**
- **All SDS’s must follow the 16-section format that was established by the U.N.’s Globally Harmonized System (GHS).**
- **Sections 1-3 of an SDS give basic information about what the material is, its ingredients and how to identify it.**
- **Sections 4-6 of an SDS describe emergency response measures that workers should take if there is a spill or accidental exposure.**
- **Sections 7-10 of SDS’s set out the safe work practices and the personal protective equipment that workers should use to work safely with the HAZMATs on their jobsite.**
- **Sections 11-16 of an SDS give people like supervisors and environmental managers technical information about a material, such as its toxicology and potential ecological impact.**
- **Now that you know how to use GHS Safety Data Sheets to find the information that you need to work with HAZMATs safely, you can help to create a safer jobsite, and community... every day!**