



Hazard Communication:

Understanding the Chemical Hazards Around You

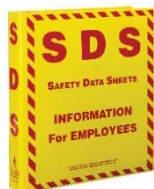
Often referred to as “the backbone of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA),” Hazard Communication was created to ensure that Northwestern provides their employees with important safety information pertaining to chemicals in the workplace.

Hazard Communication, commonly referred to as “Hazcom,” is based on two fundamentals:

Right to Know	Right to Understand
Provide all safety information to every employee who works near or with hazardous chemicals	Ensure our employees understand the hazards of the chemicals in the workplace

In order to accomplish the Hazcom fundamentals described above, OSHA requires Northwestern to ensure departments are completing the following hazard communication program requirements:

1. Assign responsible staff to ensure Northwestern’s Hazcom Program remains compliant
2. Identify all hazardous chemicals used in the workplace by developing a chemical inventory – this can be completed by conducting the following tasks:
 - Survey work areas
 - Review purchase orders
 - Check and verify all safety data sheets (SDSs) have been received
3. Ensure all chemical containers are properly labeled
4. Collect every SDS and ensure they are readily accessible – designate a person to obtain and manage SDSs
5. Train employees on how to protect themselves and properly handle hazardous chemicals



When In Doubt, Ask

According to OSHA, several studies indicate employees do not understand approximately one-third of the safety and health information listed on SDSs. This illustrates that simply providing access to SDSs is not enough to communicate the potential hazards of certain chemicals. Instead, employers need to ensure employees understand this information and encourage them to ask questions when confused or concerned.

The Key to Safety is in Your Hands

- ❖ Know where and how to access your department’s SDSs
- ❖ Read the label and SDS prior to using any chemical – if you ever encounter an unidentifiable chemical container, notify your supervisor and do not use
- ❖ Never dispose of excess or waste in a drain or trash can – if you need assistance with disposing of a hazardous chemical, contact Risk Management
- ❖ Store each chemical per the manufacturer’s instructions, which can be found on the SDS

Preparation and training are key

Learn more: Complete *Hazard Communication* training at learn.northwestern.edu.

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review common hazardous materials used in your workplace and discuss how they can be used safely.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Safety at home

Every day in the U.S., at least 300 children ages 0-19 are treated in an emergency department as a result of poisoning from chemical exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To keep your family safe, it’s important to follow these chemical safety tips:

- ✓ Keep medicines and toxic products, such as cleaning solutions and detergent pods, in their original packaging and locked away.
- ✓ Call the poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 or 911 if you think a child has been poisoned.

For Additional Information

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