

Hazard Communication - “Your Right to Know”

Introduction:

Exposure to hazardous chemicals is one of the most serious threats facing workers today. As an employee, you have the “right to know” about the hazards.

The Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) has been revised by OSHA to align with the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals. The reason for this alignment is to bring clarity in the communication of the potential hazards of a chemical.

Discussion Points:

- What is the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS)?
- Understanding Hazardous Materials
- Labeling Requirements
- What is a Safety Data Sheet (SDS)?
- Employee Responsibilities

Discussion:

All hazardous materials are to be labeled, and all labels are required to have pictograms along with the use of signal words indicating the relative level of severity, with “Danger” for more severe hazards and “Warning” for less severe hazards. The GHS has a rating system for the seriousness of the hazard, ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating severe hazards and 5 indicating minimal hazards.

The employer is required to have a Safety Data Sheet on every hazardous material the employee is exposed to, and provide training when the employee is hired, and when a new chemical is introduced to the workplace.

All information, the employee should be aware of is on the SDS, which is a comprehensive information guide about a chemical. To stay safe, always read the labels and Safety Data Sheets provided, and practice appropriate safety measures, including wearing specified Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

As always, be safe out there!

