

Material Safety Data Sheets Quick Reference

What the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) tells you:

The MSDS provides you with the information you need to know to protect yourself from exposure to a particular hazardous chemical, under normal conditions of use, as well as during emergencies. The information on an MSDS is provided by the manufacturer or distributor of the chemical. You are required by OSHA to maintain copies of the MSDSs for the chemicals used and stored in your work area.

Regulations do not require a standard format for MSDS information, so one MSDS may look different than another. However, regulations do require that all MSDSs be written in English and that they provide the following information:

- Chemical name, trade name, synonyms and CAS number
- Name, address and telephone number of the manufacturer
- List of hazardous ingredients
- Exposure limits (OSHA PELs, ACGIH TLVs or other established limits)
- Conditions under which the chemical will burn, explode, melt or become a dangerous gas
- Normal appearance and odor of the chemical
- How to put out a fire involving the chemical
- What to do if the chemical leaks or spills
- Primary ways the chemical enters the body
- Known health hazards of the chemical
- Medical conditions that may be aggravated by exposure to the chemical
- How to prevent a dangerous exposure (handling, storage, protective equipment and disposal)
- Signs and symptoms of exposure to the chemical
- What to do if you are exposed
- When the MSDS was last updated

Where to Find the MSDS:

Regulations require MSDSs to be kept where they are accessible to workers, while they are working. They may be stored in three ring binders or on computers. Complete sets may be kept in several locations or one central location at your workplace. Wherever they are, Material Safety Data Sheets can keep you well informed about chemical hazards in your work area.

If you are interested in obtaining more in depth health and safety information about chemicals you are working with, contact the Environmental, Health and Safety Office at 432-1720 (Longwood) or 495-2060 (Cambridge/Allston).

