HazCom Employer’s Guide
Step 2: Identify Responsible Parties

What You NEED To Do

As an employer, you need to identify a single person that is responsible for "owning" the HazCom program. Too many cooks in the kitchen make it very difficult to stay on top of legislated and industry requirements. This person, should be responsible for the following:

• Creating and maintaining an inventory of all hazardous chemicals stored or used within their area of responsibility.

• Ensuring that all hazardous chemicals/products are properly labeled, and that these labels are not removed or defaced.

• Maintaining copies of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each hazardous chemical in the workplace, and ensuring that the SDSs are readily available to employees.

• Identifying employees under their supervision who may be exposed to hazardous chemicals under normal operating conditions or in a foreseeable emergency based on hazard assessment.

• Informing employees of: Any operations in their work area where hazardous chemicals are present; the location and availability of the written Hazard Communication Plan; the chemical inventory; SDS; and the requirements of the Hazard Communication Standard.

• Providing employees with training regarding hazards or practices specific to their work area at the time of their assignment and whenever a new hazard is introduced into their work area.

• Maintaining training records through the online database or with Department Supervisors.

• Determine the required personal protective equipment (PPE) for the procedures and materials in use in their area.

• Ensure the proper PPE is made available to employees.

• Ensure the employees are trained in the use of PPE, the PPE is properly maintained, and the employees wear the appropriate PPE where necessary/required.

• Develop safe procedures for work in their areas, as well as written procedures for emergencies.

• Inform outside contractors of chemical (or other) hazards that they may be exposed to while working at your location, while also informing them of the location of the SDSs.

• Inform employees about proper performance of non-routine tasks.

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What Are My Responsibilities?

The answer to that question depends on who you are, and what you do.

Manufacturer/Importer Responsibilities

Manufacturer/Importer Responsibilities

If you manufacture or import chemicals, you're responsible for classifying the hazards of those chemicals. Appendixes A and B of the Standard contain instructions you'll need to do this. Based on that classification, you must then use information included in Appendix C to determine what hazard information, including signal words and pictograms, you'll need to include on labels for all chemical products you ship downstream.

You also need to develop SDSs for all chemical products you import or manufacture. There are 3 circumstances in which you're required to supply SDSs. First, you must supply them with initial shipments of chemical products to downstream users. Second, you must include a new SDS with the next shipment after you revise the SDS for any reason. Third, you must send an SDS whenever requested to do so by a downstream user.

As a manufacturer or importer, you're at the top of the supply chain, and everyone downstream depends upon the accuracy of the shipped labels and SDSs you supply. That's why it's especially important that you get it right!

Distributor Responsibilities

Distributor Responsibilities

The HazCom Standard defines a "distributor" as "a business, other than a chemical manufacturer or importer, which supplies hazardous chemicals to other distributors or to employers." Basically, this means that you're a distributor if you receive chemical products

from a primary manufacturer, and then ship them to users downstream.

You're responsible for including shipped labels and SDSs with the chemicals you ship downstream. That means you should stay on top of the chemical suppliers who ship to you in order to make sure they're sending you accurate hazard information for the products they supply.

Employer Responsibilities

Employer Responsibilities

Employers are the end-users of chemicals, and have the important responsibility to ensure that their own employees have the information they need about the hazards of chemicals in the workplace. Remember the discussion about the "bad ole days" before there was a HazCom standard – what a dangerous time it was for workers? OSHA developed employer requirements under the HazCom Standard to help reduce the potential for those situations.

The very beginning of the HazCom standard requires employers to have a "comprehensive HazCom program." But what does that mean, exactly? To meet OSHA's requirements, an employer needs to include these 5 components in their plan:

- *A Written Hazard Communication Program*. Consider this your "playbook" for managing HazCom at your site. That's why it's so important that your program is "site specific." Resist the temptation to just download any old template from the internet and put your company's name and address on it. You need to lay out the details of *your* chemical hazards, *your* storage practices, *your* workplace labeling system (more on that later!) and *your* training program. You also need to make sure this program is accessible to all of your employees, and that they know where to find it.
- *Chemical Inventory List*. Just like the name implies, this is a list of all of the chemical products in your workplace for which you are required to maintain SDSs. You can probably

see the reason why this is a required element – you can't communicate the hazards of chemicals in the workplace to your employees if you don't know what chemicals you have. As you bring new chemicals into the workplace, make sure that the chemical inventory list is kept up to date.

- *Proper Labels and Warnings*. Employers must ensure that shipped labels on incoming containers are not removed or defaced. But there are plenty of containers in the workplace other than the initial shipped containers – including transfer buckets, spray bottles, drip pans beneath equipment, and reservoirs for hydraulic oil and coolant within machines – and OSHA requires you to make sure those containers are labeled, too! Your system for labeling and communicating the hazards of chemicals in these kinds of secondary containers is called workplace labeling.
- *SDSs and Right–to-Know Access.* The whole purpose of the HazCom Standard is to protect workers who are exposed to hazardous chemicals. It shouldn't be a surprise that one of the most central responsibilities of an employer is to ensure their workforce can access the SDSs for chemicals they work with during their workshifts. The key is that they must have access to the exact documents for the exact chemicals they work with, which means you have to maintain the SDS for the chemicals provided by the manufacturer, rather than "generic" SDSs. You also can't have any barriers to access. For example, if you keep your SDS library in a supervisor's office, and that supervisor then goes to lunch and locks her office door, employees would not be able to obtain the SDS in the event of an emergency. A cloud-based SDS management system can help provide the 24/7 you and your workforce need.
- Of course, none of the efforts you make to manage HazCom will bear fruit if your employees don't understand the Standard, or the specific details of your HazCom program. That means you'll need to train them, and more importantly, you'll need to verify that they've understood their training.

Shipping and Receiving

HazCom & Shipping and Receiving

Although S&R employees may not directly use chemicals to perform their job duties, a basic understanding of the known and potential company chemical hazards should be provided. This is necessary in the event containers get damaged during transport or through movement within the building, as well as in storage.

You may have a well-trained chemical response team which cleans up leaking or spilled containers, but your shipping and receiving workers are the first-line of defense in the facility in this regard. And further, storage of many chemicals certainly requires knowledge of incompatible products and conditions to avoid.

As a result, make sure the S&R employees know:

- Pictograms and hazard warnings on labels, packages and placards
- Health and physical hazards classes of common chemicals that may be received or shipped
- Safe handling of flammable liquids and compressed gas cylinders
- Initial response to chemical spills or leaking or broken containers (for example, should they clear the area and summon the chemical response team? Do they know how to call these team members? Are there chemicals that if spilled or leaking, require an automatic limited or full facility evacuation?)
- Incompatible materials, both in spills and in storage
- The health and physical hazards of incompatible materials
- Proper selection and use of PPE that may be necessary when shipping or storing products

In addition to these topics, safe transportation of chemicals and use of secondary containers should be reviewed.

And occasionally, workplaces receive chemicals in error. A driver pulls away and a drum is accidentally left behind sitting on the

dock, and it is not yours. This product could be one that your facility is not familiar with. Until the foreign chemical can be removed from the workplace, it may present a new hazard if it's leaking, or even in normal storage. S&R should be aware how to respond to these events.

Temporary Workers

HazCom and Temporary Workers

Your responsibilities also vary depending on the employment contract of the workers in question.

Typically, the staffing agency and the host employer share training responsibilities for temporary workers. Generic training on the basics of HazCom is often provided to workers by the staffing agency. However, depending on the nature of the site-specific requirements of the workplace or the anticipated job duties, the staffing agency's training may not be sufficient to protect temporary workers fully.

As a recommended practice, work closely with staffing agencies and review the nature and types of training provided. In many cases, you'll need to supplement temporary worker HCS training. As OSHA states, "Many OSHA standards include specific safety and health training requirements to ensure that workers have the required skills and knowledge to safely perform their work." Hazard communication is one such standard that often requires specific information to be relayed to the temporary worker.

As with your other employees, ensure your temporary workers understand:

- How to read SDS, pictograms, and hazard warnings on labels, packages and placards.
- Where to get additional information, such as the location of SDS and supervisors to ask about chemical hazards.
- Health and physical hazards classes of common chemicals they will have exposure to.

- Safe handling and storage of chemicals on the job.
- Signs of exposure to chemicals.
- Selection and use of PPE needed for chemical handling.
- What to do in the event of a chemical emergency, such as a spill or first aid event.

Maintenance Workers

HazCom and Maintenance Workers

Of all employees groups, maintenance often present the biggest challenges in compliance, especially when it comes to chemical exposure. Typically, in small to medium-sized companies, these workers handle a variety of tasks, and your maintenance crew can create or repair almost anything.

This may mean they are using chemicals in non-traditional or inappropriate ways, perhaps welding in the plant near flammable products, or using multiple (and possibly incompatible) chemicals without sufficient ventilation or respirators.

And depending on the nature of your company structure, maintenance workers may also purchase chemicals and bring them into the plant without any tracking process. This can create issues with compliance, as well as safety and health. Safety Data Sheets and chemical inventories often don’t reflect these purchases, and hazards associated with these chemicals might not be included in HCS training.

There are several ways to prevent these types of inadequacies in the HazCom program, including:

- Provide additional HCS training for maintenance workers to reiterate the safe usage of various chemical products, as well as general and job-specific HCS information on labeling, secondary containers, and SDS.
- Perform Job Safety Analysis (JSAs) for routine, and especially, non-routine maintenance duties. For example, the

annual cleaning and preventative maintenance of the boiler, should have JSAs to discover potential chemical hazards, as well as other hazards.
- Create a tracking system to ensure all chemicals purchased are included in the written HCS program and inventory. Instruct maintenance workers on this system.
- Frequently examine the storage of chemical products in the maintenance shop, to ensure they are stored safety and appropriately. Retrain workers, if needed, on this topic.

OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard Ensures the Worker's "Right to Know"

Hazard Communication is meant to be a program that is regularly and consistently used, as it provides several layers of safety for your workers. HazCom compliance is the responsibility of everyone who has known (or potential) exposure to chemical hazards. But this is only possible if everyone understands how to apply the standard to their duties.

HazCom and Training

The HCS shouldn't be gathering dust on the shelf, nor should the HazCom training be a one-and-done method. The foundational aspects of HazCom are an ongoing, daily process for all workers who have known or potential exposure to chemicals in the course of their job duties.

However, often that is not the case. Employees may not grasp the relevance of HazCom in meaningful ways which protect them from chemical health hazards or protect the facility from physical hazards, like fire. OSHA has stated, "An employer's training program is to be a forum for explaining to employees not only the hazards of the chemicals in their work area, but also how to use the information generated in the hazard communication program." In short, workers must know *how to use* what they've learned.

Of course, training for HazCom is required initially, before

workers are exposed to chemical hazards, and additionally, if a new health or physical hazard is introduced. But as HazCom training is not compulsory on an annual basis, workers can easily forget the material and the elements of the standard that keep them safe.

Clearly employers must focus HCS on the workers with obvious hazards, such as those mixing or directly handling chemicals. But other employees in your company likely have potential HCS exposure, too. And some workers might have unusual chemical exposures, by virtue of their job functions.

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