

HazCom Employer's Guide

Step 8: Maintain SDS

What You NEED To Do

An important aspect of the HazCom program is to ensure that someone (e.g., the HazCom Coordinator or a designee) is responsible for obtaining and maintaining the SDSs for every hazardous chemical in the workplace. If an SDS is not received automatically from the distributor, one must be requested as soon as possible. If the request for an SDS does not produce the information needed, the local OSHA area office should be contacted for assistance.

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Paragraph (g) of HazCom 2012 states that employers must have an SDS in the workplace for each hazardous chemical they use.

If an SDS is missing, one must be requested from the distributor. To show good faith effort to obtain an SDS, it is prudent to document the request (e.g., keep copy of the letter or e-mail; make a note regarding telephone contact). A hazardous chemical for which there is no SDS on file should not be used until the SDS is obtained.

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The SDSs have 16 internationally agreed upon components or sections that contain information for many different audiences (e.g., employers, workers, safety and health professionals, emergency responders, government agencies, and consumers). Consequently, the sections have been organized so that the

information of most use to exposed workers, emergency responders, and others who do not need extensive technical detail is in the beginning of the SDS (Table 5).



For example, a description of a chemical's health effects appears in Section 2 (Hazard identification), but the toxicological data upon which the determination of these effects is based appears in Section 11 (Toxicological information). All of the sections are available to any reader, but there is a difference between what is necessary for a broader audience and what might be needed by others designing protective measures or providing medical services.

The information in some of the sections is non-mandatory because they address information that involves the requirements of other government bodies, and thus they are not under OSHA's jurisdiction. Even though these sections are not considered mandatory by OSHA, the sections are still required. They provide useful information related to ecological, disposal, and transportation-specific issues under the regulatory control of other agencies.

Employers must not only maintain copies of SDSs, they must also ensure that the SDSs are readily accessible to workers during their work shifts. Some employers keep the SDSs in a binder in a central location, others provide access electronically. However, if access to SDSs is provided electronically, there must be an adequate back-up system in place in the event of a power outage, equipment failure, or other emergency involving the primary electronic system.

Familiarity with the information in each section of an SDS will enable both employers and employees to quickly access this information in case of an emergency. A section-by-section description of the information required for each part of the SDS is available in Appendix D of HazCom 2012.

OSHA also developed a QuickCard™ on SDSs (OSHA 3493) available on

the OSHA Hazard Communication website.

The SDSs must be in English, although the employer may maintain copies in other languages.

[Software](#) is available to help you easily author SDSs based on required standards, manage and maintain your collection of SDSs as well as access your safely cloud-based safety data sheets at any time.

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