

SAFETY MEMO

April 12, 2021 – Use of Safety Data Sheets (SDSs)



Did you know?

Interpretation of SDS

The Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for a chemical identifies the dangers to human health and the environment. It provides useful information on how to use the chemical safely. The SDS also contains essential information for emergency services (firefighters, medical staff) in the event of an exposure. It is therefore essential to know how to interpret the document.

The Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of classification and labeling of chemicals has been put in place by the United Nations. This harmonized approach made it possible to establish an international reference system for the labeling of hazardous materials to classify the dangers and ensure their communication, through pictograms.

Due to the globalization of the transport and use of chemicals, this unification is essential to ensure the safe use of chemicals.



How to Use an SDS?

Here are the 7 key points of using an SDS:

- 1. Locate general information:** product name, supplier, label, composition and physical-chemical properties.
- 2. Know the dangers associated with the product:** flammability, stability, health and environment.
- 3. Use the product correctly:** review uses identified or advised against, handling, storage, protective equipment and exposure limit values.
- 4. Proper product disposal:** management of waste and contaminated packaging.
- 5. Reference transport information:** special precautions and road/rail/sea classification.
- 6. Know what to do in an emergency:** first aid, fire-fighting measures, and measures to be taken in the event of an accidental spill.
- 7. Consult exposure scenarios:** if an e-SDS has been developed, reference the annex for information on exposure scenarios.

Development and Distribution of SDS

SDSs are written by the manufacturer, the importer or the seller. They must be written in an official language of the region where the product is offered for sale.

SDSs must be dated and sent by the supplier of the product upon delivery in paper and/or electronic form. Requirements for this information are:

- Compulsory for hazardous substances and mixtures.
- Available upon request for certain mixtures not classified as hazardous containing hazardous substances at individual concentrations above the thresholds defined by law.

Annual SDS updates should be requested to ensure the information provided is current. Hazardous products that are not labeled and/or not accompanied by an SDS should not be used until these requirements are in place.



Information Sources

For more information, review the following documents listed below:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration document:
[https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3514.pdf#:~:text=The%20SDS%20includes%20information%20such,storing%2C%20and%20transporting%20the%20chemical.&text=The%20SDS%20preparers%20may%20also,in%20various%20section\(s\).](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3514.pdf#:~:text=The%20SDS%20includes%20information%20such,storing%2C%20and%20transporting%20the%20chemical.&text=The%20SDS%20preparers%20may%20also,in%20various%20section(s).)
- Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety website:
https://www.cchst.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/sds.html
- QuickFDS.com (website giving access to many supplier SDSs):
<https://www.quickfds.com>

