

# Arizona Daily Star

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## Section: Business

### Local firm to testify on use of chemicals

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A Tucson-based company aims to help shape the way the federal government regulates hazardous chemicals in the workplace.

On Thursday, MC Technologies LLC will present recommendations to the U.S. Senate subcommittee on employment, safety and training, part of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The panel is considering changes to federal rules governing the documents on chemical safety that employers must provide in workplaces.

Founded in 2002, MC Technologies markets a proprietary, Internet-based software program that simplifies safety information on hazardous chemicals. The company employs 10 workers in Tucson and 10 at other sites.

The issue before the subcommittee is the federal Hazard Communication Standard, administered by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Since 1984, the standard has required employers to keep documents called "material data safety sheets" on file to help workers handle chemicals properly.

Supplied by chemical manufacturers, the safety sheets describe types of hazards - such as flammability or corrosiveness - emergency cleanup methods and other safety information.

Critics of the system say the program is inaccurate, outdated and unnecessarily complex.

"We are suffocating under the countless reams of paper that are causing more problems than solutions," wrote Jon Hanson, safety director for the Wyoming Medical Center in Casper, an MC Technologies customer. Hanson will present the written testimony to the subcommittee on Thursday.

Before adopting MC's program, the Wyoming hospital kept 20,000 pages of material safety data

sheets on 2,500 chemicals, Hanson said.

Most of the data sheets required on some 650,000 potentially hazardous chemicals commonly found in workplaces are long and written in technical language, said John F. Rooney, CEO of MC Technologies.

Without standardized formats, the sheets often make it difficult for workers to find emergency information needed to safely deal with spills.

One chemical, for example, has a 65-page data sheet, while others are a single page.

MC Technologies believes its software may hold an answer.

The company's Maxcom program divides all chemicals into 36 categories with similar attributes - such as "flammable combustibles" and "corrosives" - and provides a one-page safety sheet and an emergency-response guide for each category.

The software, which complies with OSHA rules, assigns three hazard levels to each category - red, yellow or green. - and features descriptions written at a sixth-grade language level.

"Our systems incorporate the spirit of what they're looking for," Rooney said. "We've done all the heavy lifting."

Karan Singh, MC Technologies' chief scientific officer, has filed written testimony with the subcommittee.

Among Singh's recommendations: the development of standardized phrases to describe hazards; minimum testing levels for hazards such as corrosiveness and flammability; and categorization of hazard levels written in "plain English."

MC Technologies has about 400 customers nationwide that include hospitals, utilities, mines, manufacturers and school districts. In Arizona, the company's customers include aerospace manufacturer Hamilton Sundstrand in Phoenix.

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