



Q&A — MSDS compliance

What are some tips for efficiently keeping MSDSs current and accessible?

POSTED: 06/01/2005

QUESTION:

Employers are required to provide and maintain material safety data sheets (MSDSs) for any hazardous chemical used in the workplace. What are some tips for efficiently keeping MSDSs current and accessible?

ANSWERS:

While facilities using hazardous chemicals spend time and money to keep MSDSs current and accessible, expecting currency and access to maximize workplace safety is like expecting an infant to be able to swim simply because a lifeguard is on duty. It misses the point entirely.

When employers rely on the information in MSDSs to respond to a chemical incident, they are just asking for trouble. Most MSDSs are inaccurate and written in languages that stretch even a toxicologist's intellectual capacity. Keeping them current and accessible does not respond to the core flaw: They are not doing the job they are designed to do, in that a growing number of chemical-related deaths and injuries are being attributed to faulty hazcom systems.

Categorization is the future of hazcom, where chemicals can be grouped by hazard level — in plain English. Effective categorization promotes a level of accuracy, comprehensiveness and simplicity in chemical management and training that the MSDS alone simply cannot.

John Rooney, President, MC Technologies