

Preparation of Safety Data Sheets for Hazardous Chemicals

Code of Practice Fact Sheet



Government
of South Australia

SafeWork SA

The *Code of Practice – Preparation of Safety Data Sheets for Hazardous Chemicals* is available on the SafeWork SA website at safework.sa.gov.au. This fact sheet provides a summary of that Code.

Hazardous chemicals are substances, mixtures and articles used in the workplace that can be a health or physicochemical hazard if not handled or stored correctly.

Health hazards are hazards like skin irritants, carcinogens or respiratory sensitisers that have an adverse effect on a worker's health as a result of direct contact with or exposure to the chemical, usually through inhalation, skin contact or ingestion.

Physicochemical hazards generally result from the physical or chemical properties, like flammable, corrosive, oxidising or explosive substances.

WHS Regulations and the GHS

The *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)* (the WHS Regulations) established a new system of chemical classification and hazard communication on labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS), based on the *Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals* (GHS).

However, there is a five year transitional period for moving to the new GHS-based system. Workplace chemicals will not need to be re-classified or re-labelled immediately. During the five year transition period, manufacturers may use either the GHS for classification, labelling and SDS, or the previous hazardous substances and dangerous goods classification systems.

From 1 January 2017 all workplace chemicals must be classified according to the GHS, and labels and SDS must be updated.

Please note that some hazardous chemicals are excluded from the labelling provisions of the WHS Regulations and therefore the Code does not apply to those chemicals.

Refer to page 3 of the Code for more information on exclusions.

The GHS is a single internationally agreed system of chemical classification and hazard communication through labelling and SDS. The GHS is published by the United Nations and includes harmonised criteria for the classification of physical hazards, health hazards and environmental hazards.

For modifications to the requirements of the GHS, refer to Schedule 6 of the WHS Regulations. A copy of the GHS is available at www.unece.org (Quick links\GHS).

Safety Data Sheets

An SDS, previously called a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), is a document that provides information on the properties of hazardous chemicals, such as the identity, health hazards, safe handling and storage, emergency procedures and disposal considerations. The SDS should always be referred to when assessing risks in the workplace.

An SDS must be in plain English, contain unit measures in Australian legal units, state the date it was prepared or last reviewed, state the contact details of the manufacturer or importer, and state an Australian contact number from which information about the chemical can be obtained in an emergency.

Refer to pages 6 and 7 of the Code for more information on what must be contained in an SDS.

Preparation

The WHS Regulations require the manufacturer or importer of a hazardous chemical to prepare an SDS for the chemical. Additionally, a supplier must provide the manufacturer's or supplier's current SDS for the hazardous chemical on first supply to a workplace and upon request.

In South Australia, manufacturers and importers of chemicals are able to continue to use the existing MSDS arrangements for workplace hazardous substances and dangerous goods up until 31 December 2016.

This applies for chemicals which have been classified according to the *Approved Criteria for Classifying Hazardous Substances* and the *Australian Code for Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail*.

Approval

An SDS does not need to be formally approved. In South Australia, SafeWork SA is responsible for determining whether an SDS complies with the WHS Regulations. You should contact the SafeWork SA Help Centre if you require any assistance with SDS requirements.

Review

The manufacturer or importer of a hazardous chemical must review the SDS at least once every five years and amend whenever necessary to ensure that it contains correct and current information e.g. if new data becomes available which changes the chemical's hazard classification.

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