

MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) basics

What every maintenance manager needs to know

The most common mistake that organizations make with the MSDS and the chemicals is that the inventory of chemicals in use does not correspond to the MSDS sheets in the notebook or file. The fine, as in other areas runs from \$7000 per incident per day to \$25,000 per incident per day.

Consider computerizing the whole process. OSHA has accepted the presence of the MSDS sheets in the computer. With networks you can avoid trouble by having a company-wide file available to everyone.

It is the manufacturer of the chemical that is responsible to get the MSDS to you. You are responsible to notice if you have it or not.

A major source of inspections originates from disgruntled employees anonymously calling OSHA.

MSDS highlights:

Part #1 - OSHA hazard

This section is an overview of the hazard. Read it carefully to determine if a significant hazard exists.

Part #3

Precautionary label information as prescribed by the EPA

These sections go through the specific first aid steps for all types of exposure including ingestion, inhalation, skin contact etc. If you work with dangerous materials study these sections and be prepared.

Part #4 First aid

Part #6 Toxicological Information

While this is designed for Doctors and scientists a quick read through these sections would tip you off if the material is very toxic or very dangerous to the environment.

Part #7

Environmental Toxicology

Part #9 Fire

This part will alert you to a potential fire hazard or a potential deadly reaction with another chemical. In some cases mixing two safe chemicals results in an unsafe reaction. For example the gas given off by mixing bleach and ammonia is deadly.

Part #10 Reactivity

Other parts - Transit, handling, spill procedures, regulation

All of the other information necessary to use, transport, clean-up chemical

The exact format of the sheet varies by manufacturer but there are general sections that contain critical information that every employee should know. There are as many as 15 parts to the MSDS sheet

Executive Summary

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