



V.I.E.W.S.

VIEWS & INFORMATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL & WORKPLACE SAFETY



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THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE MSDS

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tion, Chemical and Physical Properties, Reactivity, Ecological and Toxicological Information, Methods of Disposal, Transportation and Regulation Information.

MSDSs are periodically updated to include the latest information known about the substance they represent. For example, if a new method is devised to combat a particular chemical fire, the manufacturer will update the appropriate section of the MSDS and include it with subsequent shipments of that chemical. An MSDS always has a date on it to indicate when it was last updated, and since these documents must contain current information, it is important to know this when looking up a MSDS for a chemical stored in your workplace. Last year's information may be this year's misinformation!

An MSDS is also considered a chemical exposure record, and DEP is required to keep the records of chemicals used by its employees. In general, a binder is kept in a central location that can be accessed at all times by employees. The binder contains a list of all the chemicals used in the facility and the locations where they are used. The binder also contains the actual MSDS with detailed information on the chemical employees are using.

What This Means to You

As an employee, you have the right to know about the chemicals you work with at any DEP facility. The MSDS binder is there for the benefit of everyone, and if you require information regarding a chemical that you may be exposed to by using them, this document is useful for such a purpose. It is a resource that is always there for you. As always, if you have questions about MSDSs or any other safety related matters, you should contact your Supervisor or your local Health and Safety representative.

The MSDS, a term widely used in the workplace, is an abbreviation for **M**aterial **S**afety **D**ata **S**heet. These documents have become familiar to employees, due to the highly visible yellow binders in which they are found and the attention given to them through Hazardous Communication/RTK training held throughout the Agency. When working with chemicals, it is important to understand their hazards and to use the MSDS for obtaining such information and for providing guidance on safe use and handling.



Obtaining MSDSs is a regulatory requirement that was developed by the Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA) for manufacturers to provide information on chemicals. The information contained in this document is important to persons who use and handle a particular chemical product. Users must be aware of the chemical and physical properties of these chemical products.

Chemicals, as useful as they are, can be a danger to users if misused. Some chemical materials are not compatible with others, while some materials have restrictions on how they are transported and used. The information in MSDSs is organized into sixteen sections; each section conveys a specific type of information to the reader. In all current MSDSs, the sixteen sections cover: the Chemical Product and Company Identification, Chemical Composition, Hazard Identification, First Aid Measures, Fire-Fighting Measures, Handling and Storage, Personal Protec-



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Dealing with Asbestos

By

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For many of us Do-It-Yourselfers, taking down walls, replacing pipe insulation, and removing floor tiles are just part of the thrill of home improvement. But how many of us wonder what is in that wall we just took out? What about the pipe wrap and the mastic behind the vinyl floor tiles? Is that white, crumbly powder that I just stepped on asbestos? If it is, so what?

Asbestos, a Greek word for “inextinguishable, unquenchable, or indestructible,” because of its superb fireproofing characteristic and corrosion resistance, is a fibrous mineral. This naturally occurring mineral is so abundant that it can be found in two-thirds of the rocks in the earth’s crust. By nature, it releases its fibers by erosion that are carried by wind and water.

Asbestos has been used for over 5,000 years in more than 3,000 products. The Romans and Greeks used asbestos to make napkins because being thrown into a fire could clean them. Knights in the Middle Ages used asbestos to insulate their armor suits. Nowadays, asbestos can be found in various building products in older structures, such as walls, fireproofing materials, pipe and boiler insulation, floor tiles, vinyl

Remember, if asbestos removal is not a topic in the home improvement book, it is probably not a good idea to do it yourself.

sheeting, ceiling tiles, construction mastics, vehicle brakes, high temperature gaskets, roofing shingles, etc. While Russia is the largest asbestos producer, Canada is the second, although it has the largest asbestos mine.

There are two groups of asbestos: 1. serpentine, which is found in the form of chrysotile or white asbestos and 2. amphibole, which consists of the forms of crocidolite – blue asbestos, amosite – brown asbestos, anthophyllite, actinolite, and tremolite. The serpentine form has curly, flexible, and long fibers, while the amphibole variety has straight, rigid, and short fibers. Of the six forms of asbestos, chrysotile is the most commonly used asbestos. Amosite is used in insulating materials and crocidolite is typically found in asbestos-cement products. The amphibole variety poses a greater health risk than serpentine because it can penetrate the lung tissue and remain there for a longer duration. Today, only chrysotile is used after its fiber is encased in a matrix of either cement or resin.

What makes asbestos dangerous is its ability to release tiny fibers into the air when crumbled. Once entered into the lung, it can scar the lung tissue and impact its function. The three serious diseases caused by asbestos exposure are: asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma.

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Lead Management

Trivia question:

How did plumbers get their name?

Answer: From the Latin *plumbum*, meaning lead.

We know that lead has been used for supplying water and many other uses since ancient times. Today, however, the presence of lead in our homes and workplaces is no trivial matter as lead is known to cause serious health effects from exposure. DEP has developed an **EH&S Lead Management Policy** to provide the information and procedures you need to follow when dealing with lead on the job.

Lead is a highly toxic, heavy, yet soft metal with a low melting temperature. It may be found in its metallic and alloy forms, and in the form of lead compounds and mixtures, such as paints. Old lead-based paint is considered the most significant source of lead. Lead dust can be created from peeling or chipping paint, which can be inhaled. You should assume that painted surfaces are lead based, if you are not certain. There are many other potential sources of lead which include construction materials, contaminated soil, and the balancing weights on vehicle tires.

A list of common job tasks where a DEP employee may be exposed to lead and the potential exposure levels can be found in the DEP Lead Management policy. The policy provides examples of High and Low Risk work activities and the corresponding training requirements.

Exposure to lead can cause many adverse health effects such as anemia, weakness, memory loss, high blood pressure, constipation, abdominal pain, vomiting, damage to the nervous urinary and reproductive system. Exposure at high levels causes convulsions, coma and even death.

All DEP employees should NOT disturb painted surfaces or equipment containing lead, unless they understand the hazards and procedures and are authorized by the responsible manager. Also, employees should:

- Be aware of hazards of lead, including how exposure can occur as well as signs and symptoms of exposure.
- Notify supervisors if lead or lead containing material is found.

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EHS Employee Concerns Hotline



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I'm sure you've seen the flyer about the DEP Environmental, Health & Safety (EHS) Hotline posted in your facilities or on your office bulletin board. You may have asked yourself, "what's this all about, how does it work, and does anyone use it?" Well, in response, I can tell you the following: a) it's all about you and your safety concerns; b) it works by connecting you to answers to your EHS questions via a toll-free telephone number, and c) employees do use it.

First, here's more about the EHS Hotline: in 2003, DEP launched its Environmental, Health & Safety (EHS) Employee Concerns Program. Although DEP encourages its employees to discuss any work concerns, including EHS problems or issues, with their supervisors, the EHS Hotline provides another option for raising such issues. The EHS Hotline is part of the DEP Employee Concerns Program. The program, administered through the Office of Environmental, Health & Safety Compliance, was established to allow employees to report concerns relating to environmental, health and safety issues and to identify and prevent the harassment and intimidation of co-workers who make such reports.

Now, here's how it "really" works. The EHS Hotline operates through the use of a toll-free telephone number [800/897-9677] which is accessible to DEP upstate and in-City employees. Using this telephone number, DEP employees may call the hotline 24-hours a day, 7 days a week to report environmental, health and safety questions, concerns or problems. Calls are received by a voice-box mail system and employees are greeted with a recorded message. In addition to calling the voice mail box, employees may address written complaints to the Office of Environmental, Health & Safety Compliance/Employees Concerns Program (at Lefrak).

The program was specifically set up so that employees who wish to report environmental, health or safety issues may choose to identify themselves or to remain anonymous. Best of all, Hotline or written communications are treated as confidential and are always investigated for follow-up or corrective action, as appropriate. When a voice message or written complaint is received, it is assigned a unique complaint number. Next, an investigation is conducted to resolve or address the concern. Resolution of a complaint may include taking action at a facility to correct or improve

conditions that led to the complaint. On average, it takes anywhere from 2 to 5 working days to resolve a complaint; in most cases, there is action taken to correct the situation within 1 or 2 days.

Since it established the EHS Hotline, DEP has handled and successfully resolved a variety of employee complaints. Here are some examples:

1. During this past winter, some employees complained about the lack of heat at their work site. The Bureau was contacted and repairs were made to the heating system in just a couple of days.

2. Another employee called about unclean conditions at his worksite. The landlord was contacted, the workspace was cleaned up and a follow-up inspection was conducted days later to ensure that the space was still being properly maintained.

3. Calls to the Hotline have also resulted in indoor air assessments being conducted and corrective action being taken at locations where there were complaints about allergies or other related illnesses.

As you know, DEP employees may continue to contact the Federal Monitor with any complaints or concerns they have about EHS issues [888/875-4800 or 732/280-4800]. However, as we endeavor to make improvements to our EHS program, I invite you, as part of this effort, to call the Hotline and allow us to demonstrate that DEP employees are capable of taking care of your concerns without hassles, harassment or intimidation.

In the next few weeks we will be redistributing to all DEP bureaus, for posting, flyers explaining the Hotline and providing the Hotline number. You can also find information on the OEHS web page of the DEP Intranet system "Pipeline" at <http://pipeline>.

So, if you've got a question or complaint about your environment, health or safety, give the Hotline a call. You will be pleased with the results!!



Safety & Health Promotion: A Winning Idea



“Good Card or Bad Card”



Janet Huang, Training Specialist from the DEP’s Office of Environmental Health & Safety Compliance, is the Safety & Health Happy Meeting/Promotion Winner from MakeSafetyfun.com. This is as a result of her winning submission concerning the participatory technique she utilizes in the, Right to Know Training and Information sessions she conducts.

During Janet’s Right to Know Training classes, participants are separated into teams comprising two to four persons. Throughout the training she poses a number of questions to each team. If the response to the question is correct, then the team has the coveted opportunity to randomly pick a card out of a deck of 7 cards. The card picked can either be a “**Good Card or a Bad Card**”. The **Good Card** provides several desirable incentives or benefits to the team, on the contrary the **Bad Card** gives less than desirable options, which many prefer to do without. Here is a sample of the rewards the “**Good Card and Bad Card**” game may provide:

- ♥ Exemption from all the questions for the rest of the class
- ♣ The winning team can sign out first without having to wait for other participants to sign out
- ♥ A mystery Prize
- ♦ Answer the next question correctly and they can choose to have a mystery prize, an exemption from questions, or sign out first on the attendance sheet
- ♥ Pass (The question is automatically passed to the next team)
- ♣ Pass the question to a particular team
- ♥ Answer the next two questions



Each team member is not only involved in the decision making process, but is also encouraged to compete for the mystery prize. Overall the technique is an innovative and effective one that captures the participants’ attention, lending to greater interaction and participation in the classes. All in all, greater participation transfers to meeting the class objective of understanding and the awareness for the promotion of job safety in the workplace.

As the winner, Janet will receive twenty-five (25) Safety & Health Puzzles on CD and a book, *52 Easy Ways To Turn Your Meetings From Bland to Grand*, which she will share in future employees’ training.

After exposure, symptoms of these diseases take more than 20 years to show up. Cigarette smokers with asbestos exposure are ten times more vulnerable to develop asbestos-related diseases than non-smokers.

Does this mean we cannot coexist with asbestos? It is true that exposure to asbestos can be dangerous. However, the health risk is slight if asbestos-containing materials (ACM) are managed well in-place and not disturbed. Therefore, if the ACM is not friable, it can be left in-place. Friable ACM can be encapsulated to minimize disturbance and prevent fibers becoming airborne. Periodic monitoring can assure minimal asbestos exposure for building occupants. If asbestos removal is to be undertaken, please follow federal, state, and local regulatory requirements. You can also refer to the guidelines in the DEP Environmental Health and Safety Policies and Procedures for Asbestos Management. The goals of this procedure is to ensure that DEP's employees are not exposed to airborne asbestos fibers above levels required by federal, state, and local regulations; minimize hazards; identify location (s) of asbestos materials with any worksite; establish safe work practices; and provide training to affected employees.

Lead

Only DEP Hazmat personnel and individuals trained in lead cleanup may clean up affected areas. Dry sanding, grinding, or blasting lead based paint may only be done with a HEPA vacuum. Compressed air may not be used to blow down clothing or debris containing lead.

No DEP employee may perform lead abatement, which is defined as the permanent elimination of lead based paint hazards. Abatement does not include renovation or remodeling activities, which are designed to repair or restore a structure.

Be aware that you could be exposed to lead. It can still be found in the workplace and overexposure can be harmful to your health. DEP has developed the Lead Management policy to enable you to protect yourself and your coworkers. If you come across some material that you think might be contaminated with lead, report it to your supervisor.

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OEHSC

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The Office of Environmental, Health and Safety Compliance (OEHSC)

has been established to coordinate and enhance agency-wide environmental and occupational health and safety management activities. Its mission is to provide support and direction in complying with relevant federal, state, and local standards, guidelines, and regulations as well as to monitor the effectiveness of agency-wide environmental, health and safety policies.

The goal of the Office of Environmental, Health and Safety Compliance is to promote pro-active compliance strategies through the preparation and revision of procedures, programs, and employee training (specifically tailored to Agency operations), while assessing hazards, preventing violations, and maintaining safe and sensible work practices.