

INFECTION CONTROL SNAPSHOT

Material Safety Data Sheets



A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) contains information (e.g., chemical composition, associated hazards, handling precautions, personal protective equipment requirements) describing the hazardous chemical. Having a complete inventory of MSDSs is essential to a successful Hazard Communication (HAZCOM) Program.

In a Nutshell: MSDS

Chemical Manufacturer/Importer Responsibilities	Employer Responsibilities	RIGHT-TO-KNOW INFORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepare a MSDS for each product containing hazardous chemicals ◆ Provide a copy of the MSDS with each product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Maintain a MSDS for every hazardous chemical in the office ◆ If a MSDS is not provided with a product, the employer must obtain one ◆ Make MSDSs readily available to all employees ◆ Provide training to employees on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to find the MSDS (location in the office) - each MSDS applicable to their job - how to read/use the MSDS 	

A Few Words About Going Paperless.....

OSHA does not specifically prohibit any form of access to MSDSs as long as “no barriers to immediate employee access in each workplace” exist. Electronic access to MSDS information is acceptable; however, a backup system is required and several items must be considered. AFI 90-821 (Hazard Communication) states that MSDS backup systems may include, but are not limited to, paper copies, CDs at another non-impacted location, telephone, fax, or access through a nearby HAZMART or Bioenvironmental Engineering Flight. AFI 90-821 further states that local judgment must be used to determine an adequate back-up system on a case-by-case basis in case primary computer access is disrupted. For example, if a telephone service is selected for back-up, it must meet all OSHA requirements and a paper copy of the MSDS must be provided as soon as possible after the request; verbal transfer of hazard information over the phone alone is not acceptable. In some instances local policy may be more stringent, so as always, ensure that your MSDS program is consistent with local base policy.

OSHA requires that the MSDS is readily accessible and has defined “readily accessible” as “immediate.” Furthermore, OSHA cautions users about completely relying on “paperless” systems and states that users “may want to maintain paper copies as a backup in case of system failure or an inability to readily access the data.” **Therefore, if choosing an electronic system as your primary access to MSDSs, it may be prudent for USAF clinics to maintain a notebook containing paper copies of all MSDSs as a backup to ensure immediate employee access at all times (e.g., during a power outage, during computer system disruptions).**

Items to Consider Before Going “Paperless”

If considering electronic access for MSDSs.....	When selecting a company to provide electronic MSDS access.....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ACCESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does everyone have immediate access to a computer? - If a CAC card is needed, is it always available and does it work on all computers in the building? - Is the MSDS information up-to-date in the electronic database—do all MSDSs match the date/lot number for all chemicals used? - Is a working printer available to print a copy of the MSDS to take when the individual goes for medical treatment/follow-up or to provide to emergency response personnel? ● BACK-UP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the back-up system meet all OSHA HAZCOM requirements? ● COMMUNICATION/TRAINING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is everyone trained to locate the MSDS information on the computer and use it appropriately? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the product meet the OSHA HAZCOM requirements for MSDS format and access? - Is the MSDS program reliable? How often is the MSDS information updated? - Who is responsible for updating the information—you or the company? - Is the program easy to use? How are the MSDSs organized? - Is the computer database/program compatible with your computer system and DoD standards for installation? - Is the company reliable? - Will the program save time? - Is the system cost-effective?

Just a few things to think about

- Where are the MSDSs located in your clinic?
- Do you know how to find information on the MSDS?

If you want more info

- Air Force Instruction 90-821: Hazard Communication (www.e-publishing.af.mil)
- OSHA: Hazard Communication Standard (www.osha.gov)

