

Proper MSDS Training Can Save Lives

By Mike Benmoschè

The material safety data sheet or MSDS is a document with data describing the properties of a particular chemical substance. Supplied by chemical manufacturers, it plays an important role in workplace safety. The intent of this form is to provide workers and emergency personnel with procedures for handling or working with this particular substance in the safest manner possible. It can include information such as physical data (melting point, boiling point, flash point, etc.), health effects, first aid, disposal, use of protective equipment, and spill handling procedures. The MSDS is required to state the chemical's risks, safety and the impact on the environment. Although there are some components required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the exact format can vary significantly.

One of the most important OSHA rules is that this document be displayed in an area readily accessible to all employees during their respective shift. Creating a binder with each sheet kept in a protective sheath is usually a convenient way to store them and meet this objective (keep in mind this is not the only acceptable manner (i.e. microfiche or electronically stored data is fine too). However, each employee should be made aware of where this is kept and their awareness should be documented.

Since these forms have vital information that could

prove instrumental in saving the life of an employee in an emergency situation, it is essential that they be properly trained in how to read and interpret them. Making this a priority at the orientation phase of the hiring process is highly recommended.

The following is a brief outline of what a typical MSDS should contain along with an explanation of terms. Once again, keep in mind that as discussed earlier, these documents can vary significantly from one manufacturer to another. However, they should at least include the items listed below as well as their content.

Identity

In this section, the name of the specific materials is identified by its chemical name, brand or trade name. This is very important if you are to be able to correctly cross reference this sheet with the label on the specific container holding the product. For this reason it is especially vital to be sure that these labels are visible and legible. It is also often a good practice to attach a copy of the MSDS directly to the container as well. Don't overlook the spray bottles and smaller containers that may be used outside the wash. It is just as important to be sure they are properly labeled as it is for the larger drums.

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Section I – Manufacturer’s Identification

Here you will find the name and address of the chemical manufacturer who is responsible for preparing the MSDS. This should include both emergency and non-emergency phone numbers as well as the date the form was created.

Section II – Hazardous Ingredients/ Identity Information

This is one of the most important sections of the MSDS since it identifies the potentially hazardous components of the material using the specific chemical’s common name and identity.

Section III – Physical/Chemical Characteristics

The physical/chemical characteristics of the hazardous substance are described in this section. These include, but are not limited to, boiling point, melting point, density, specific gravity, volatility and the general appearance and odor of the product. This is especially helpful in designing equipment and procedures to control the hazards.

Section IV - Fire and Explosion Hazard Data

A material’s potential for fire and explosions, the fire hazards of the chemical and the conditions under which it could ignite or explode, and recommended extinguishing

agents and fire-fighting methods must be described in this section. It is highly recommended that you share this with your local fire department to aid them in their efforts should a fire occur at your location.

Section V - Reactivity Data

This is where you can learn about information regarding chemicals and substance with which the chemical is incompatible or with which it reacts. This will assist in determining safe storage and handling of reactive substances.

Section VI – Health Hazard Data

This includes information on the potential adverse health effects and symptoms associated with exposure to the material and its components. It is designed to assist in determining handling and other procedures for the material. You should also find any first aid procedures here as well.

Section VII – Precautions for Safe Handling and Use

This section contains a list of the precautions that may be used to foster safe handling as well as recommended industrial hygiene practices, precautions to be taken during repair and maintenance of equipment, and procedures for cleaning up leaks and spills.

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Glenwood 3470J



By Ray Justice

That's my phone number from 50 years ago. I was trying to think why I remember it when I can't remember important things like my mother-in-law's birthday.

Back then, folks weren't quite as busy and things were a little simpler. Seems as if when GL3470J rang, many times, it was a friend.

That was then and this is now.

Today the phone is often an intrusion, an annoyance, or at least that's how many of us think about it.

Can't they see how busy I am?

Instead of a friend, and an automatic smile, it's a bother.

Don't they know I'm busy right now?

Today, we have to learn to smile as we pick up the receiver, it's not automatic any more.

According to Nancy Friedman, the Telephone Doctor, it takes only four to six seconds to make a good first impression over the phone. By the time you say hello and who you are, your impression has been cast.

Here are a few tips to help you out:

1. Use rising inflection in your voice; it shows you are happy to receive a call.
2. Hold your head straight. If your head is cocked, (holding the phone by your shoulder), so are your neck and throat. When are they ever going to redesign those receivers?
3. Use a headset when possible – saves trips to a chiropractor.
4. We don't have party lines any more, so how are your privacy and background noise?
5. Pay attention. Don't open mail or use your computer while you are on the phone – you're not really there (present) with the person on the other end.
6. Keep a glass of water by your phone.
7. Smile – you'll warm up the caller (and yourself).

First impressions over the phone are just as important as visual impressions.

So, before you pick up that phone, think GLENWOOD 3470J. It might be a friend, old or new.

And, if you can't remember my old phone number, smile – that's what you do when you see a friend, and besides, it might be me. ■



Ray Justice, a former carwash owner in western New York, now operates a free creative thinking and decision making website which he is using to publish a poetry book due out this fall. You can reach him at ray@discovervaquestions.com

Section VIII – Control Measures

This final section lists generally applicable control measures for reducing worker exposure to the hazardous substance. These include engineering controls, safe handling procedures, and personal protective equipment (Personal protective equipment includes gloves, eye protection and respiratory protection equipment to name a few).

MSDS reports undoubtedly can be very technical in nature. It is important to filter out the more confusing parts and concentrate on the information that can be easily explained to the employee. By taking the time to do this and properly train your employees, your wash takes a big step in providing a safer place for your workers and could even help save a life. ■



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