

## WHY DO I NEED A SAFETY DATA SHEET?

If your organisation uses or supplies chemical products you should know about CHIP and the requirement for safety data sheets.

You should be receiving safety data sheets with many chemicals, and you may be a business which has to provide safety data sheets with your own products.

This leaflet explains why the information in a safety data sheet is important, both to you and to others.

## WHAT IS REQUIRED?

CHIP, which stands for the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 requires suppliers to identify the hazards (or dangers) of the chemicals they supply. This is called classification. If a chemical is classified as dangerous under CHIP, your supplier must provide you with information about the hazards that the chemical presents.

Some hazard information will be provided on labels, but an important requirement of CHIP is that your supplier must provide you with more detailed hazard information on a *safety data sheet*.

## WHY IS A SAFETY DATA SHEET IMPORTANT?

Safety data sheets are important in helping you, or anyone you supply, to make the workplace safe and to protect the environment.

More specifically, a safety data sheet contains information to help you make a risk assessment as required by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH).

The safety data sheet itself is not an assessment. However, it will describe the hazards, helping you to assess the probability of those hazards (ie the risk) arising in the workplace.

To help with COSHH risk assessments, HSE has developed simple step-by-step guidance, which starts with the information on the safety data sheet, and ends with an explanation of how employers can best protect their workers. This guidance, known as *COSHH Essentials*, is available free on the Internet at [www.coshh-essentials.org.uk](http://www.coshh-essentials.org.uk). The information on the safety data sheets is important, especially the boiling point and the classification, because it will help you to do your COSHH Essentials risk assessment. If this information is not on the safety data sheet, you should ask your supplier to provide it.

## WHO PRODUCES SAFETY DATA SHEETS?

Your supplier is responsible for providing accurate safety data sheets with dangerous chemicals. The supplier might be the manufacturer, or an importer or distributor.

You should not receive the safety data sheet later than the product itself. However, it may be sent separately, for example it could be transmitted electronically (if you have the technology to receive it).

As well as receiving dangerous chemicals you may supply them on to others. It is important that you also pass on safety data sheets containing enough information to make sure that the chemicals can continue to be used safely. You may be able to use the safety data sheet your suppliers give you to produce your own. But it is your responsibility to make sure that the safety data sheet is accurate.

Even if the safety data sheet is adequate when you receive it, you may need to add extra information if you know more about how the product will be used than the original supplier could have known.

## WHAT ARE THE EXCEPTIONS?

CHIP does not cover all hazardous chemicals. Some groups of chemicals, such as medicines and cosmetics, are covered by other legislation and have different rules for packaging and labelling.

Retailers do not have to supply safety data sheets to the general public. But if you buy a dangerous chemical from a retailer for use at work, the retailer must provide a safety data sheet if you ask for one. Retailers do not have to give you the safety data sheet with the product, provided they make arrangements to forward it promptly.

In general, you only have to provide safety data sheets with *dangerous chemicals*. However, an exception is made for some chemicals which are not classified as dangerous. If they contain either a dangerous chemical above a certain level or a chemical which has a Community exposure limit, suppliers will need to make a safety data sheet available on request. Many suppliers already provide safety data sheets with chemicals that are not classified. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (section 6) requires suppliers to provide adequate information on the safe use of substances in the workplace.

#### WHAT MUST THEY CONTAIN?

CHIP lists 16 headings which must appear on a safety data sheet. The information included under these headings will help you to make sure that the product is used safely. For example, the safety data sheet should describe the hazards the chemical may present, provide information on how it should be handled, stored and disposed of and explain what should be done in the case of an accident, ie first aid, fire-fighting measures, and so on.

Although these headings are obligatory, CHIP does not specify exactly what information should be included under them. However, HSE publishes an Approved Code of Practice: *The compilation of safety data sheets* which offers guidance to the sort of information that should be provided under the headings. But it is the supplier's responsibility to ensure that the user has enough information to decide how to protect people at work and the environment.

#### WHERE CAN I FIND FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you need to know more about safety data sheets the Approved Code of Practice: *The compilation of safety data sheets* Third edition L130 HSE Books 2002 ISBN 0 7176 2371 8 is available from: HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995. Website: [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)

HSE priced publications are also available from good booksellers.

For information about health and safety ring HSE's InfoLine Tel: 08701 545500 Fax: 02920 859260 e-mail: [hseinformationservices@natbrit.com](mailto:hseinformationservices@natbrit.com) or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG. You can also visit HSE's website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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