

# Work **Safe!** Bulletin

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## HAZARD WATCH - What you don't know CAN hurt you!

### Awareness:

It is estimated that occupational illnesses cost Canadians \$600 million each year. Workers and employers are no longer willing to pay the price of lost income and human suffering. Hazardous materials in the workplace are the cause of many occupational illnesses.



The key to safe handling and use of materials is more and better information. The first step is a new, all-inclusive system for providing information. It is called "WHMIS" for "Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System." It is in effect all across Canada.

Manitoba's part in the national system is HazardWatch, a program to help employers and workers comply with the WHMIS Regulation and the Workplace Health Hazard Regulation. This bulletin is only an overview of the two regulations; for details please consult the regulations (M.R. 52/88 and M.R. 53/88).

### Hazard Identification:

1. **Labels** - Recognizing a hazard is the first step to avoiding it. Suppliers of hazardous materials or "controlled products", as they are legally called, are required to label them. The labels are easily recognized with borders of diagonal lines and distinctive symbols indicating the hazards such as: Recognizing a hazard is the first step to avoiding it. Suppliers of hazardous materials or "controlled products", as they are legally called, are required to label them. The labels are easily recognized with borders of diagonal lines and distinctive symbols indicating the hazards such as:



flammable



poisonous



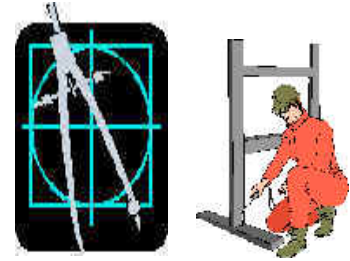
corrosive

Other required information on the label is also vitally important. It includes identifiers for the product and the supplier, descriptions of risks, and precautionary measures and first aid. The label must also carry a statement confirming that a "Material Safety Data Sheet" (MSDS) is available.

2. **Data Sheets (MSDS)** - Suppliers must provide details about controlled products on Material Safety Data Sheets. Employers must obtain an MSDS for every controlled product brought into the workplace or must prepare one for hazardous materials produced on the premises. Any worker who may come in contact with a controlled product can therefore consult the appropriate hazard information. The MSDS gives detailed information necessary to identify the hazards of a product, along with preventive and first aid instructions. To protect some business information, certain confidential trade secrets may not be included, but hazard information must be provided.

**Workers Watch for Hazards:**

- 1. Right to Know** - Under the regulations, every worker has a right to find out about any hazard posed by a controlled product in the workplace. This information is necessary to protect the health and safety of workers, so employers have an obligation to provide it. In turn, workers have an obligation to protect their own health and safety and others who may be affected by the things they do.



- 2. Safety & Health Committees & Worker Representatives** - Teamwork is achieved through Workplace Safety and Health Committees, which represent management and worker interests, or through designated Worker Representatives. Committees or Representatives have active responsibilities in the HazardWatch Program. They consult with their employer in making inventories of controlled products, participating in worker education, writing prevention plans, and other aspects of HazardWatch.
- 3. In Smaller Workplaces** - Hazards can be as great in small workplaces as in large ones. Information is available to help smaller workplaces find the resources they may need to carry out HazardWatch.

**Employers Provide Information:**

- 1. Training** - Whenever a worker is expected to work with or near a controlled product, the employer is required to inform the worker of the hazard. Instruction must be provided in a way that workers can put into practice. Training should cover the following subjects:



- label information
- MSDS information
- Safe procedures for use, storage, handling and disposal
- emergency procedures

- 2. Labels and Data Sheets** - The employer must ensure that information is always available. This means that there must be a label on every controlled product container and an MSDS for easy reference. Proper training provides workers with the knowledge to recognize and deal with the information they receive.

*Under the regulations, each of the following steps is required of employers, in consultation with Workplace Safety and Health Committees or Worker Representatives:*

- 1. INVENTORY:** First, a list is prepared of all the controlled products in a workplace. The list is updated whenever controlled products are changed.
- 2. EVALUATION:** Next, each product must be evaluated to determine hazards to health. Wherever there is risk, safe limits for exposure ("Occupational Exposure Limits") must be set. Whenever these limits are approached, the employer must take action to prevent health hazards. This action can include product substitution, work practice controls, engineering controls, and protective equipment.
- 3. MONITORING:** Monitoring means measuring regularly to ensure that the amount of exposure to a controlled product does not exceed safe levels for workers. It is required whenever a worker may be exposed beyond safe limits
- 4. RECORDS:** Records of the steps taken in the HazardWatch program must be maintained in workplaces for a period of 30 years. Affected workers have access to these records.



**Control Measures:**

- **Substitution** - It is often possible to replace a controlled product in the workplace with a safer product to perform the same function.
- **Work Practice Controls** - On-the-job activities that lead to exposure can sometimes be modified or eliminated. Risk is therefore reduced by changing the task.
- **Engineering Controls** - Changes to equipment, floor layouts, or other engineering arrangements can often control a hazard. Vent hoods, for instance, take fumes away from workers and exhaust the fumes safely.
- **Personal Protective Equipment** - When none of the measures listed above will sufficiently limit exposures, it may be necessary to use personal protective equipment to safeguard workers. Examples of this equipment include suitable respirators, gloves, or coveralls.

**The HazardWATCH PROGRAM**

A Prevention Plan is required to organize a successful HazardWATCH Program. Some important elements of the plan include:

STEP 1	Consult with Workplace Safety and Health Committee or Worker Reps. Ensure input from both workers and employers.	STEP 2	List the Controlled Products. Prepare a full inventory so each hazard can be addressed.	STEP 3	Collect Hazard Information. Use the information available on labels and MSDS's.
STEP 4	Evaluate the Hazards. By identifying the risks, prepare to eliminate or reduce them.	STEP 5	Take Action. Use control measures to prevent health hazards.	STEP 6	Document the Plan. The Prevention Plan is a written action plan to outline steps to be taken over the next 12 months to ensure the health of workers.
STEP 7	Post the Plan. A copy of the Prevention Plan must be readily available in the workplace				