

WORKPLACE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INFORMATION SYSTEM

WHMIS – A National Standard

WHMIS is Canada's national hazard communication standard. The key elements of the program are cautionary labelling of containers of WHMIS "controlled products", material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and worker education and training programs. The objective of WHMIS is to ensure the protection of Canadian workers from the adverse effects of hazardous materials through the provision of applicable health and safety information.

- WHMIS is implemented through coordinated federal, provincial and territorial (F/P/T) legislation. Supplier labelling and MSDS requirements in respect of sale and importation of controlled products are set out under the *Hazardous Products Act (HPA)* and associated *Controlled Products Regulations (CPR)* administered by Health Canada.
- The *CPR* establish a national standard for the classification of hazardous workplace materials. In addition to setting out criteria for biohazards, chemical and acute hazards, the regulations specify criteria for chronic health hazards including mutagenicity, carcinogenicity, embryo and reproductive toxicity, respiratory tract and skin sensitization.
- Each of the F/P/T departments/agencies responsible for occupational health and safety has established employer WHMIS requirements within their respective jurisdiction. These requirements place an onus on employers to ensure the safe use of controlled products.
- WHMIS was developed through and represents a consensus amongst representatives of suppliers, employers, organized labour and the F/P/T governments. The program continues to evolve through an ongoing consensus process facilitated by Health Canada.
- There are several million chemical products available to the Canadian market which would be subject to WHMIS requirements if sold, imported or used in Canada. Imports account for approximately 50% of the Canadian market. Almost all workers who work in other than an office environment, (estimated to be over 3 million Canadians), are exposed every day to chemicals on the job.
- The nature of the market and scope of WHMIS present a great challenge in ensuring compliance with the regulatory requirements and achieving the goals of the program in terms of worker health and safety.
- The main objective of the comprehensive Web site established by Health Canada is to facilitate compliance with the WHMIS requirements of the *HPA* prior to products being marketed in Canada.



www.hc-sc.gc.ca/whmis