

HAZARD COMMUNICATION & MSDS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE HAZARD COMMUNICATION STANDARD?

- The “HazCom” standard requires employers to communicate chemical hazards to their employees. Key elements are training, chemical labels, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs), and a chemical inventory (or list) of all hazardous chemicals in the work area.
- This standard is enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). External auditors, such as those from AAALAC, CAP, or Joint Commission, may assess Duke’s compliance with this standard.

WHAT IS AN MSDS?

- The MSDS, or Material Safety Data Sheet, is a document produced by the chemical manufacturer that includes important chemical information, including:
 - ♦ Physical and chemical characteristics;
 - ♦ Physical and health hazards, including relevant exposure limits;
 - ♦ Precautions for safe handling and clean-up of spills, including recommended personal protective equipment (PPE); and
 - ♦ Emergency and first aid procedures.

WHEN IS AN MSDS REQUIRED (OR NOT)?

- An MSDS is required for any chemical that is considered “hazardous” by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- MSDSs are specifically NOT required for food or alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, or drugs that are in solid, final form for direct administration to the patient (such as tablets or capsules that will be taken whole by mouth). They are also not required for consumer products, if those products are used in a manner similar to the intended consumer use.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHEMICAL LABELING?

- If you buy a commercial product, it will come with the appropriate label information: chemical name, hazard warnings, and the manufacturer’s name and address.
- If you transfer the chemical into another container but don’t use it all that day, the second container must be labeled with the chemical name (and concentration) and any hazard warnings (as shown on the original container).

HOW DO I OBTAIN AN MSDS?

- Go to www.safety.duke.edu/OHS/MSDS.htm and follow the instructions there. (Note that there are special MSDS resources for healthcare employees.)
- If unable to find an MSDS this way, try searching Google for “MSDS” and the name of the product.
- Call OESO—Occupational Hygiene and Safety at 684-5996 if you need help.