

:: Safety Data Sheets (SDS) ::

Safety data sheets, or SDSs, are a widely used system for cataloging information on chemicals, chemical compounds, and chemical mixtures. SDS information may include instructions for safe use and potential hazards associated with a particular mixture or product. Every workplace should have readily accessible SDSs for all the hazardous materials that are used or stored there. You should be familiar with a product's SDS **before** you begin using the material.

When a new product/chemical is brought into the workplace, everyone who uses it should review the SDS and be provided with appropriate safety-related information on the new material.

When it comes to hazardous materials, don't wait for an emergency to learn about the material's hazardous properties. Suppose the material catches fire? The SDS specifies correct fire-fighting procedures for the material; however, your chances of successfully extinguishing the blaze are very small if you waste valuable time running to review the SDS.

There are other very good reasons to review the SDS before using a material. By doing so, you will learn what personal protective equipment, or PPE, is required when using the product, in addition to learning what conditions to avoid when working with the product (such as heat and sparks). SDSs tell you what products or substances should not come into contact with the hazardous material and also provide valuable information for the proper storage and disposal of the product.

SDSs contain a wealth of useful information for you to use when working with a hazardous material. Remember, the best time to learn the content of the SDS is before you use the material.

Another thing to be aware of is that mistakes can, and do, happen. If you are using a material that doesn't seem to fit the description on the SDS, do not use the material, but instead, contact your supervisor immediately because there could have been a mix-up in the labeling or the information on the SDS. The material may also be "out-of-spec" and could be dangerous to use as you were planning.

SDSs have proven to be very valuable tools in protecting people from hazards. They provide a wealth of information in a convenient form. But SDSs are only as useful as you make them. Take the time to review the SDSs for every hazardous material you use. For additional SDS information, visit the following website (SDS search—a national repository). <http://www.msdssearch.com/msdssearch.htm>