

Hazard Communication MSDS: That Big Book

As part of OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, companies must keep an inventory of all the chemicals (and hazardous materials) that they have in the workplace. The standard was not written just to make extra work for the company. It was developed to make sure everyone in the company knows what is on site and how it should be properly handled. For each hazardous material on site, there must be a Material Safety Data Sheet, commonly called MSDS. An MSDS contains tons of important information about that material. Questions like "Does it Burn?" "Does it react with other chemicals?" and "What should I do if I get it on me?" are answered by the MSDS.

Once a company collects MSDSs for all of their materials, they assemble them together in a binder or in a database and must make the sheets available to employees upon request.



In most scrap operations, the company has the collected MSDSs; however, very few people know much about the information they contain or how to use it. When asked about MSDSs, the reply is commonly "You mean that big book?" People know where it is, but they don't know what it is about.

If someone walked up to you and asked you to find the MSDS on hydraulic fluid could you do it?

That may sound like a dumb question that would never happen, but think about emergency situations. Say a coworker gets blasted in the eyes with hydraulic fluid and you need to find the MSDS so emergency responders know what to do. Could you do it? If you were the one with a chemical in your eye, you would want people to know how to treat it.

Take the time to learn more about Material Safety Data Sheets, where they are and how to read them. If you have questions, ask your supervisor.

This e-mail was produced by the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. For more information, visit us on the Web at www.ISRI.org
For comments or suggestions about *For Your Safety*, e-mail barneyboynton@isri.org

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