

Understanding Material Safety Data Sheets

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

KEY POINTS:

- An **MSDS** is available for each hazardous chemical you use.
- Be sure to check the **MSDS** before you start working with a hazardous chemical.
- The **MSDS** will tell you how the chemical could affect your health.
- Ask a co-worker or supervisor for help if you can't locate or understand an **MSDS**.



Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

Bring enough copies of a sample MSDS to the training session for each trainee. Choose an MSDS for a product commonly used in your operation.

What is a **material safety data sheet**?

- A material safety data sheet – also called an **MSDS** – is an informational sheet that is available for each hazardous chemical we use in our operation.
- The **MSDS** is one of two places where you'll find information about the chemical's properties, characteristics and hazards. The other place is on the product label.
- We are required by law to make **MSDSs** readily available to you.

*Note to trainer: Tell employees where **MSDSs** are located in your operation.*

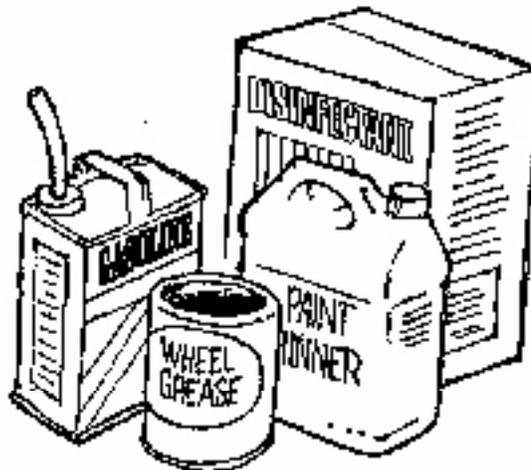
- Before you begin working with a chemical, check to see if it has an **MSDS**. If you have trouble reading it, ask your supervisor or a co-worker for help.
- Be sure to return the **MSDS** sheet to the location where you found it.



Which products have **MSDSs**?

- Many different types of products have **MSDSs**. These include paint thinners, disinfectants, pesticides, diesel fuel and gasoline.
- **MSDSs** are **not** required for personal care products such as hand soap, hand cream or sunscreens.
- Here is an **MSDS** for one chemical we use.

*Note to trainer: Distribute copies of the sample **MSDS** to each trainee.*



(Continued on back)

See our [full line of safety supplies](#), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

Understanding Material Safety Data Sheets

Here's how to read an MSDS

- Each MSDS you see may look slightly different. Don't be confused. They all must contain certain information.
- Important items to look for are how the chemical could affect your health, the emergency telephone number and emergency steps to follow if needed.
- Now, I'll review each section of an MSDS.

Note to trainer: Hold up your MSDS and point to each section as you discuss it. Remember: The MSDS you have may not be in this exact order.

- **Name of the product, manufacturer's name and emergency telephone number.** You can generally find this near the top of the first page.
- **Hazardous ingredients.** This section will list the hazardous ingredients found in the chemical.
- **Physical and chemical data.** This section will tell you how the chemical normally looks and smells.
- **Fire and explosion data.** This will tell you what should be used to put out a fire.
- **Reactivity.** This section tells you what to avoid mixing the chemical with or exposing it to.



The next section is very important

- **Health hazard data.** Read this part of the MSDS carefully. It will tell you how the chemical could enter your body. It will list any symptoms to watch out for, and will tell you what emergency steps to follow if you are accidentally exposed.
- **Safe handling and use.** You'll learn here how to safely handle and store the chemical, and what to do in case of an accidental leak or spill.
- **Control measures.** This will tell you what personal protective equipment to wear when handling the chemical.



Are there any questions?

Note to trainer: Allow time for trainees' questions, then review the Material Safety Data Sheet Do's and Don'ts.

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- Ask where the MSDSs are located if you aren't sure.
- Find the emergency phone number and the emergency procedures information.
- Get help if you can't locate or read an MSDS.

DON'T:

- Be confused by different MSDS formats.
- Overlook the important health data section.
- Expect to find an MSDS for hand soap or other personal care products.

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