

Employee Rights:

The cornerstone of the NYS Public Sector Right-to-Know Law and implementing regulations are the guaranteed Employee Rights:

Employees have the right to information on the toxic substances used in the workplace and the right to be notified of that right.

Posters notifying employees of their Right-to-Know are located throughout the campus. Information on the specific chemicals used by an individual should be requested from the Department Chairperson or supervisor.

Employees have the right to attend training on the hazards of toxic substances.

Training can be accomplished in a number of manners. For instance, researchers or art studio professors provide specific information on chemical(s) used by their assistants, and supervisors provide hands-on guidance to new employees. Additional classroom-style training, designed to augment these more specific educational exchanges, is provided annually by EHS.

Employees have the right to refuse to work with a toxic substance if a written information request has not been responded to within three (3) working days.

When an employee submits a written request for information on a product used, NYS RTK Law requires a written reply be made within 3 working days. If this

written reply is not made within 3 days, the employee has the right to refuse to work with the specific compound for which the request was made. Most of these requests can be responded to within a few hours.

Employees can exercise their rights guaranteed by the Right-to-Know Laws without fear of discrimination and file a complaint with the New York State Department of Labor or the New York State Attorney General if they feel discrimination has occurred.

Employees who feel they have been subject to discrimination as a result of exercising any of the rights guaranteed by the Right-to-Know regulations may file a formal complaint. These complaints should be directed to:

NYS Attorney General
144 Exchange Boulevard
Rochester, New York
(585) 546-7430

NYS Department of Labor
Safety and Health Division
109 So. Union Street Rm. 402
Rochester, New York
(585) 258-4570

The NFPA Hazard Labeling System is not mandatory, but a number of product manufacturers use it or a similar labeling system to provide a quick, simple product hazard label.

The hazard posed by the product would be represented by a number or other symbol in each of the four colored diamond areas.

Flammability (Red)

- 4 Danger: Flammable gas or extremely flam. liquid
- 3 Warning: Flammable liquid flash point < 100° F
- 2 Caution: Combustible liquid fl. pt. of 100° to 200° F
- 1 Combustible if heated
- 0 Not combustible

Health (Blue)

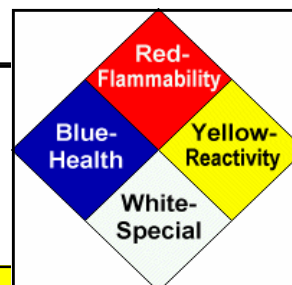
- 4 Danger: May be fatal on short exposure. Specialized PPE required
- 3 Warning: Corrosive or toxic. Avoid skin contact or inhalation
- 2 Warning: May be harmful if inhaled or absorbed
- 1 Caution: May be irritating
- 0 No unusual hazard

Reactivity (Yellow)

- 4 Danger: Explosive material at room temperature
- 3 Danger: May be explosive if shocked, heated under confinement or with addition of water
- 2 Warning: Unstable or may react violently with water
- 1 Caution: May react if heated or mixed with water
- 0 Stable: Not reactive when mixed with water

Special Note (White)

- W Water Reactive
- Oxy Oxidizing Agent



Information for Your Safety:

Hazard Communication and Right-To-Know: Occupational Chemical Hazards

- What are chemical hazards?
- Why does this apply to me?
- Who do I go to for more information?



What are Hazard Communication and Right-to-Know?

Hazardous Communication is a federal OSHA regulation requiring employees be provided information on the chemical hazards associated with products they use. Right-to-Know Laws and regulations include additional requirements specifically for New York State public employees. The OSHA Laboratory Standard, enforced by PESH in the NYS Public Sector, outlines specific requirements for communication of hazards in laboratories (including Art Studios). Copies of these regulations are available on OSHA and NYS regulatory webpages.

Communication of the chemical hazards may be

✓ By being aware of the hazards posed by the products they work with, employees are empowered to make knowledgeable decisions on protecting themselves from those hazards.

accomplished a number of ways, but **MUST** include the following:

- Labels on Containers
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)

Container Labels

Containers must be labeled with their contents and any associated health hazard. Manufacturers provide this information on original product labels. Thus, to maintain the availability of this information, labels cannot be defaced or removed.

There are very limited exemptions to this labeling requirement:

- Food, cosmetics or other items regulated by the FDA must follow FDA labeling requirements
- Temporary (one shift) lab and art studio containers need only be labeled with their contents

What is a Material Safety Data Sheet?

Material Safety Data Sheets provide a myriad of information on the physical and chemical properties of a product. They also provide information on any health risks associated with use of the product.

Quantity Issues and Miscommunications

Material Safety Data Sheets are often compiled for “warehouse quantities” of a product. Their hazard warning information is often geared toward thousands of gallons or pounds.

For example, “White Out,” a typing correction fluid, is sold to the end-user in quantities of less than one ounce. The MSDS suggests wearing airline breathing apparatus and a fully contained airtight suit for spill response. While this PPE ensemble may be required to respond to a spill of hundreds of gallons which might occur at the manufacturing plant, an end-user spill can easily be attended to with a tissue.

Manufacturers are beginning to produce end-user quantity MSDSs as a result of these unintended miscommunications.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) are requested by Purchasing and the Research Foundation with the initial order for a product.

MSDSs are maintained by the ordering Department to ensure their immediate availability to personnel.

Should an accidental overexposure to a product or other emergency involving a product occur, the MSDS should accompany the injured person(s) to the hospital or medical provider.

NYS Public Sector Right-to-Know applies to over 400,000 products and substances, including water and salt. Right-to-Know refers to these as “toxic substances”

MSDSs typically provide the following :

Chemical Identification

- Chemical name
- Chemical trade name
- Synonyms
- Manufacturer name and address
- Emergency phone numbers

Hazardous Ingredients

- The concentration of the toxic components of the product.
- Exposure limits for these components, usually expressed in parts per million (ppm)

Important Point: The lower the exposure threshold of the product, the more hazardous the product!

Physical Data

- Color
- Odor
- Specific gravity

Fire and Explosion Data

- Extinguishing media (foam, water, CO₂)
- Flash point

Important Point: The lower the Flash Point the more likely a substance will ignite!

Health Hazards

- Symptoms of overexposure
- First aid procedures in case of overexposure
- May also list medical conditions that may be aggravated by exposure to the chemical
- Target organ(s)

Primary Routes of Exposure

- Absorption - Substance passes through the skin or other membranes. Rate of absorption is increased through damaged skin or membranes.
- Inhalation - Substance enters the body through respiratory system, directly or indirectly through inhalation of contaminated smoking materials.
- Ingestion - Substance enters the body through the digestive system, directly or indirectly through contaminated food or drink.
- Injection - Substance enters the body through syringe injection of puncture wounds.
- Toxicity: Local (direct contact) and Systemic
- Exposure effects: Acute (short term) and Chronic

Point to Remember: Correct use of Personnel Protective Equipment can help prevent entry of substance into the body!

For more information on Occupational Health and Safety, Environmental Compliance, Pollution Prevention and Emergency Situations at SUNY Geneseo, visit the EHS Webpage at www.geneseo.edu/~ehs/