

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) requires employees to identify hazardous materials in the workplace by

- ◆ preparing a workplace inventory
- ◆ performing assessments on hazardous materials produced and used in the workplace

The “Workplace Inventory” is a list of all hazardous materials present in the workplace—including all hazardous physical agents. The employer must prepare and maintain this inventory after consultation with the joint health and safety committee in the workplace or with the worker health and safety representative, if any. In a workplace without a committee or a representative, employees may select one of their number to represent them. Copies of the inventory must be given to the joint health and safety committee or employee representative and must also be made available to employees. WHMIS gets this information to employees by

- ◆ labels
 - supplier label: the label placed on a container or enclosed with the shipment of hazardous material by the supplier before shipping
 - workplace label: these labels must be placed on hazardous materials in the workplace or on material decanted from its original container into another container at the workplace
- ◆ Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

Federal law requires the supplier of a controlled product to provide an MSDS for that product. The data sheet must be in English and in other main working languages of the workplace if required. The MSDS contains nine different kinds of information (plus any other relevant information that the employer should be aware of):

- hazardous ingredients: names, concentrations, and other details of known hazardous ingredients, and of other ingredients that the employer or supplier suspects may be hazardous, or whose dangers to the body are unknown
- preparation information: name and telephone number of the person who prepared the MSDS and the date of preparation
- product information: name and address of the producer and/or supplier; must be the same as shown on the supplier label
- physical data: properties of the material, such as physical state (gas, solid, or liquid), smell, and appearance
- fire or explosion hazard: flashpoint of the material and other similar data
- reactivity data: details of stability and reactions to conditions such as light, heat, moisture, vibration, etc.
- toxicological properties: adverse health effects from exposure
- preventive measures: instructions for safe use, handling, and storage
- first-aid measures: instructions for initial treatment of those exposed to the material

Every MSDS must be current (less than three years old). It must be revised within 90 days of any new hazard information becoming known about the material.

- ◆ employee training

Employers have the duty under the law to deliver employee training. The *Health and Safety Act* directs employers to instruct employees and acquaint them with workplace hazards. With the addition of WHMIS, employers must instruct and train employees who are likely to be exposed to hazardous materials and/or hazardous physical agents.