

## A. Lesson Goal:

By the end of the training sessions, workers will:

- Understand what the Hazard Communication (HazCom) Standard is
- Know how it can protect them against chemical hazards
- Alert employees to their own HazCom responsibilities

## B. OSHA Regulation: HazCom 1910.1200

## C. Have Handy

- Your company's written Hazard Communication Program
- Sample MSDS
- Sample label

## D. Background for Instructor:

### 1. Introduction: Employees' Right to Know

There are many hazards in the workplace, but some of the most serious are the hazards associated with chemicals. Because of this, the federal government requires employers to tell their employees about the possible dangers of the chemicals they use, and how to prevent injury and illness that might result from using them. This requirement is the Hazard Communication Standard, or "HazCom" or "Right to Know" for short.

### 2. Who Is Affected by HazCom?

Virtually everyone associated with chemicals in the workplace is touched by HazCom in some way:

- *Chemical manufacturers* must determine the characteristics and hazards of what they make and communicate this information to employers.
- *Employers* must make this information readily available to their employees and train them in how to recognize hazards and protect against them.
- *Employees* must know how to obtain the information and follow all safety-related instructions and warnings.

### 3. What Is a Hazardous Chemical?

We often think of "hazardous chemicals" as a bubbling brew of poisonous liquid. Of course, some chemicals are highly toxic, but the fact is that thousands of everyday substances contain chemicals that may be hazardous, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on how they are used. These include common household items such as liquids used for cleaning.

Even in the workplace, many chemicals are not especially dangerous—unless they are used improperly or contact the human body for prolonged periods. And that's the whole point of HazCom: to make sure employees understand the possible hazards and how to avoid them.

### 4. Typical Hazards

Generally, the hazards associated with chemicals in the workplace include:

- Burning of the skin or eyes
- Skin rashes or disease

- Long-term damage to internal organs, including cancer
- Poisoning from ingesting hazardous chemicals
- Dizziness, nausea, headaches, or even asphyxiation from breathing hazardous chemical vapors
- Fire or explosion
- Hazardous vapors resulting from chemical reactions

## 5. HazCom Basics

The requirements of HazCom are very detailed, but for the purposes of this safety talk, they can be boiled down to a few basics that all employees should know.

- a. First, employers are obligated to:
  - Develop a written Hazard Communication Program
  - Tell employees about HazCom
  - Explain how HazCom is implemented in their workplace
  - Train employees to recognize and understand the employer's communication of hazards, and how to protect themselves
- b. Second, there are two major ways to communicate hazards:
  - **Material safety data sheets (MSDSs)**—these provide detailed information about each chemical, including the manufacturer, the ingredients and physical characteristics, the possible hazards, and procedures to use for safe handling and control.
  - **Labels**—these must be on each container of chemical substances, and provide the name of the chemical and information about the manufacturer, the health hazards, proper handling and storage, and proper safety clothing and equipment to use.

Employees must be carefully trained in how to read MSDSs and labels, and have them readily available. In addition, they must have ready access to the company's Hazard Communication Program.

As these basic requirements make clear, HazCom is a rule to be taken very seriously. As far as OSHA is concerned, employees unquestionably have a right to know about the possible hazards they face.

## E. Examples and Practical Exercises:

- Show copies of an MSDS and label—distribute or use as an overhead slide.
- Show copy of the company's written Hazard Communication Program.
- Ask workers to name some of the chemicals they work with, and how they can find out about their hazards.