HAZARD COMMUNICATIONS

Self-Study Guide

OBJECTIVES OF HAZARD COMMUNICATIONS

Upon completion of this self-study guide, you should be able to explain the physical and health hazards of the different categories of hazardous chemicals identified in OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, 29 CFR 1910.1200 as it applies to Pike Community Hospital.

Successful completion of this program can be accomplished by completing the examination on the last page of this self-study guide with a score of 80% or better.

INTRODUCTION

As a healthcare worker, you know the power of chemicals. They make your job easier, more effective—and they help save lives.

Yet it takes just a moment of carelessness, ignorance or poor judgment to turn one of these powerful tools into a destructive weapon.

Because when it comes to chemicals, what you don't know can hurt you—and fast.

That's why the Hazard Communications Standard developed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is so important. It guarantees your "Right to Know" about potential chemical hazards in your workplace.

Pike Community Hospital has developed a Hazard Communication Program based on OSHA's Right to Know Standard. It will help you learn about the hazardous chemicals you may be exposed to on the job and steps you can take for your safety and protection.

KNOWING THE RISKS

A chemical can be a physical hazard, a health hazard or both.

A physical hazard can cause a dangerous situation like a fire or an explosion.

A health hazard can damage your health when a chemical is inhaled, eaten or splashed on your skin or in your eyes.

- Acute health hazards hurt you rapidly, after short-term exposure.
  Examples: poisoning, chemical burns.

- Chronic health hazards harm you more slowly, after long-term exposure.
  Examples: cancer, heart damage, asbestosis.

NO ONE IS IMMUNE

You probably know that chemicals are used somewhere in the hospital such as the laboratory. But here are some facts you may not know:

Hazardous chemicals are used throughout the hospital, even in the Medical-Surgical area. Chemicals aren't just liquids in containers. Your Hazard Communication Program covers chemicals in all forms—liquids, solids, gases, vapors, fumes and mists. If it's a hazard and you can be exposed to it, it's covered. Examples:

- Anesthetic gases can cause headaches, nausea, decreased mental alertness and impaired motor coordination, birth defects, miscarriages and cancer.

- Oxygen used in operating and recovery rooms and piped throughout the hospital can make other materials highly flammable.

- Products like disinfectants and grease cutters seem harmless, but they're solvents that can damage skin and eyes.

YOUR HAZCOM PROGRAM

REQUIRED READING

You can find out how to work safely with the hazardous chemicals in your workplace by reading Pike Community Hospital's Hazard Communication Program. It includes:

- A list of all hazardous chemicals present in your facility, including those in unlabeled pipes.

- Information about how PCH will provide warning labels, Material Safety Data Sheets and information and training for employees who work with hazardous chemicals on a routine or non-routine basis.

- The names and numbers of those who are responsible for seeing that the program is carried out.

LABELS PROTECT YOU

A warning label is designed to alert you that a chemical is dangerous.
It will show:

- The products chemical name
- Any hazardous ingredients
- Hazard warnings

- The chemical manufacturer's name and address

By law, every chemical shipped into PCH must have a warning label attached to it by its producer. After that, PCH is responsible for seeing that containers stay labeled. This includes:

- Replacing any damaged, incomplete or missing labels
- Seeing that the new container is labeled when a chemical is transferred to another container.

Labels are not required:

- If a number of stationary containers in an area hold chemicals with similar hazards. PCH can post warning signs instead of labeling each container.
- On pipes that contain chemicals—even if they contain hazardous chemicals or gases.
- When you transfer a chemical from a labeled container to a portable one. The portable container does not have to be labeled if you plan to use the chemical immediately yourself. But never leave an unmarked container of a hazardous chemical unattended.

UNLABELED CONTAINER?

Never assume its contents are harmless.

MSDS: YOUR NEXT STEP

For detailed information about the hazards of a chemical and how to control them, check out its Material Safety Data Sheet or MSDS. A chemical's identity can be withheld if it is a trade secret. But the manufacturer must provide full information on the chemical's hazards and how to control them.

Chemical suppliers must provide an MSDS on every hazardous chemical they ship into your workplace.

Pike Community Hospital ensures the MSDS for every chemical you work with is available to you in your work area during working hours.

To see the MSDS for a chemical you work with, just ask your supervisor. MSDSs come in different lengths and formats, but they all contain similar vital information on a number of key points, including:

- The name of the chemical on the product's container, its chemical name and any common names, such as "formalin" for Formaldehyde. Also listed:

Manufacturer's name, address and phone number plus an emergency phone number you can use to get immediate information on specific chemical hazards.

- Any hazardous ingredients of the chemical. Also gives safe exposure limits such as permissible exposure limits (PELs) or threshold limit values (TLVs).
- Physical information to help you identify the chemical and how it behaves such as its appearance, odor, boiling point, vapor pressure, vapor density, solubility in water, melting point and evaporation rate.
- Fire and Explosion Information:
- The chemical's flash point or temperature at which it ignites.
- What to put on the fire to extinguish it safely
- Special firefighting techniques and equipment
- Any unusual fire or explosion hazards.
- Health hazards caused by the chemical
- Symptoms of overexposure, both acute and chronic.
- Medical conditions that may be aggravated by exposure.
- How the chemical can enter your body
- Whether the chemical can cause cancer
- First aid and emergency procedures—sometimes listed separately at the beginning of the form for quick reference.
- Dangers from chemical reactions with this material:
- Conditions or other materials that can cause reactions with chemical you are using
- Any dangerous substances that can be produced in reaction with other chemicals or in atmospheric change.
- How to Deal with Spills or Leaks:
- Cleanup techniques
- Personal protective equipment to be used during cleanup.
- How to dispose of waste materials properly.

> Always notify your supervisor of a chemical spill immediately. And make sure you are trained and wearing appropriate protective gear before you attempt a cleanup.

Special Protection Information on the MSDS Includes:

- Any personal equipment you'll need to work safely with the chemical.

Additional special precautions to follow when handling the chemical may include:

- What you need to clean up a spill or extinguish a fire
- Other health and safety information.

MORE MSDS TIPS

- Get to know the MSDSs for the chemicals you work with now—before a problem arises
- Two MSDS's for the same chemical? Use the MSDS with the most complete information
- Check the date of last revision to find out how up-to-date the MSDS information is.

TRAINING: OFF TO A SAFE START

Another important source of information on hazardous chemicals is Pike Community Hospital's job specific training programs. You will be trained before working with chemicals and whenever the hazards change. You will learn:

- How to understand PCH's written hazard communication program.
- How to read and use warning labels and MSDSs.
- How to detect the release of hazardous chemicals.
- The specific hazards you face from chemicals you may be exposed to on the job.
- How to protect yourself on the job through the use of personal protective equipment and safe work practices.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Your "Right to Know" does no good unless you exercise it. Be sure to read all warning labels and check out the MSDS's for the chemicals you work with. Then put that knowledge to work for you on the job by wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and following safety procedures carefully.

When it comes to working with chemicals, it's what you know that counts.