

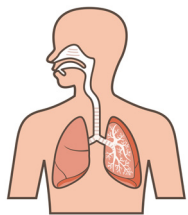
HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES IN THE WORKPLACE

Hazardous substances are often used in the workplace. Cleaners, corrosives, fuel, paints and solvents are just some examples. Using these substances without proper training and protections can lead to severe, long-term health effects. Workers have the right to know the hazards of substances they must use, how to use the product, any potential health effects and be provided the proper personal protective equipment for use.

In the workplace, information on the hazards of the chemicals workers use is given through the **Hazard Communication and Right-To-Know** regulations. Most information about hazardous substances comes from the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and labeling systems (DOT, NFPA, HMIS, GHS).

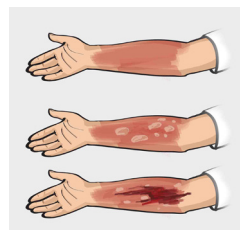
There are four ways (or routes) substances can enter the body: inhalation, absorption, ingestion or injection. Harmful effects can be acute (immediate) or chronic (long-lasting). Symptoms may not appear immediately and some effects can take 20 or more years to develop.



Inhalation:

Breathing in a hazardous substance is the most common way for a substance to enter the body. Workers can inhale:

- solids (dusts or fibers)
- liquids (mists or vapors)
- gases



Absorption:

Absorption occurs through direct contact with the skin or eyes. Solids, liquids and gases can all be absorbed potentially causing local irritation, burns and rashes as well as systematic effects to various target organs.



Ingestion:

Occurs through the mouth by ingesting substances when:

- eating or drinking in contaminated areas
- not washing hands before eating
- use of cosmetics or chap-stick
- smoking



Injection:

Occurs when a substance is forced through the skin or enters through broken skin. It is very dangerous because the substance goes directly into the blood stream. Examples of injection are:

- stuck by needles, medical waste
- glass, nails, other sharp objects
- pressurized hoses



EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS

- Employers need to go through every part of the workplace to see if hazardous substances are there. If they are, they must make a list of all the hazardous substances present, called the “chemical inventory.” They must also select and implement labeling systems.
- They must create a written program that tells how they plan to obey the regulation. This program will tell, in detail, how your employer will collect the information and take the actions needed to provide it to you.
- Get Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for every hazardous substance used. Employers must get the SDSs, and tell you what they say and how you can get one for each hazardous substance you work with. This is done as part of the training they provide.
- Train employees about the program and the hazardous substances they use. It will also tell where the chemicals are stored and how to read the labels on their containers or in pipes. This training must be provided before you start a new job, or when new hazardous substance is brought into the workplace.

Additional Right-to-Know Requirements:

- The employer must display posters in the workplace that tells who the person is that is responsible for running the hazardous chemical program so you can contact them for questions.
- Training must be provided annually, during regular hours at a convenient location and include the potential physical and health effects of the hazardous substances that workers use. Employers must keep training records.
- Gives the right to refuse to work with a chemical if the employer cannot provide an SDS for it in 3 working days.
- They must keep records of who has used hazardous chemicals in the workplace.

Under the NYS Right-to-Know Law, employers have 72 hours to provide information about toxic substances after a formal request is made. Until that information is provided, workers have the right to refuse to work with that substance.

Workers cannot be discharged, disciplined, penalized, or discriminated against for exercising any right under the Right to Know law.

For more information and resources visit:

www.cseany.org/safety



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Knowledge is power—but collective action saves lives.

At CSEA, transforming knowledge into action is central to our mission of protecting workers. When hazards and close calls are documented and reported, they can be addressed before they cause harm. That’s how we prevent injuries and illnesses—by making sure problems don’t get ignored. Your voice and vigilance are essential. Now more than ever, we need your help to ensure every workplace is safe, healthy, and accountable.

THE LIFE YOU SAVE COULD BE YOUR OWN!