

## OSHA Hazard Communication Standard – Key Terms

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)<sup>1</sup> hazard communication standard, also known as the “employee right-to-know” standard, is designed to help protect workers from exposure to harmful chemicals. OSHA requires employers to inform employees about the chemical effects associated with the hazardous products we use at work.

### Hazard communication key words

Below are common key terms and definitions to help educate employees about potential hazards in the workplace.

#### Toxic

- Overexposure to toxic chemicals can have a poisonous effect on a person. For example, prolonged exposure to arsenic is toxic to kidneys, lungs, and the nervous system.

#### Carcinogen

- Carcinogens are believed to cause cancer if an individual is overexposed.

#### Irritant

- A chemical may aggravate living tissue (such as dermatitis) at the site of contact.

#### Corrosive

- A chemical may visibly destroy living tissue at the site of contact. For example, battery acid is corrosive and will “burn” your skin.

#### Sensitizer

- A chemical may cause an allergic reaction after repeated exposures. For example, isocyanates in some paints and foam products are a sensitizer.

#### Acute Effects

- The effects of short-term overexposure to a particular chemical occur quickly and are typically temporary.

#### Chronic Effects

- The effects of long-term overexposure to a particular chemical are typically permanent.

#### Flammable Liquid

- A liquid that emits enough vapors to catch on fire and burn at relatively low temperatures.

#### Combustible Liquid

- A liquid that must be heated to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, or higher, to emit enough vapors to catch on fire and burn.

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## Q&A

Here are some questions to help start conversations around Hazard Communication in your workplace:

- Do all employees receive hazard communication training upon initial assignment?
- Are all chemical containers on this jobsite clearly labeled?
- Are Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available for all chemicals in the workplace?
- Do departments maintain an inventory of chemicals utilized in their work location(s)?
- Are supervisors minimizing the use of hazardous chemicals when possible?
- Are you provided with appropriate personal protective equipment?
- All employees must receive refresher training on the revised Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) to facilitate understanding and recognition of the new requirements.

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<sup>1</sup>Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Standard 1910.1200, 2018