



FACT SHEET #8

WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System)

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) provides information about hazardous materials, referred to as **controlled products**, used in the workplace. Under WHMIS, workers have the right to receive information about each controlled product they use---its identity, associated hazards, and safety precautions.

WHMIS has developed a classification system of six hazard classes. These classes are depicted by eight hazard symbols that identify the specific hazards of controlled products. After a controlled product has been classified, the following three WHMIS elements are used to communicate health and safety information:

- WHMIS labels
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
- WHMIS education and training programs

Responsibilities

WHMIS legislation exists at both the federal and provincial levels. Federal legislation establishes which products are controlled under WHMIS and deals with either the importation or sale of these materials. Under WHMIS, those who manufacture, import, sell, or distribute controlled products are referred to as suppliers.

Provincial legislation covers the use of hazardous materials in the workplace and identifies employers' responsibilities. Workers who work with or near controlled products must know how to handle them safely.

When an employer becomes a supplier

If employers import or produce a controlled product, even if it is for their own use, they are considered to be the supplier of the controlled product. This means they must provide an up-to-date MSDS and attach a supplier label.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

A Material Safety Data Sheet is a technical bulletin that provides specific hazard information, safe handling information, and emergency procedures for a controlled product. Since the MSDS contains detailed health and safety information specific to each controlled product, it should be used as a key source of information for developing training programs and safe work procedures.

Sample 9 and 16 section MSDS: <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/WHMIS/MSDS.asp>

This Fact Sheet is a Recommended Guideline Only; Consult All Applicable Rules and Regulations



Group	Responsibilities
Suppliers	Provide up-to-date MSDSs (not more than 3 years old) for all controlled products they sell or produce.
	Provide supplier labels on all containers of controlled products they sell or produce.
Employers	Ensure that workers understand information on MSDSs, supplier labels, and workplace labels by providing effective worker education.
	Provide training in specific safe work procedures to workers who work with or near controlled products.
	Ensure that all containers of controlled products in their workplace have MSDSs and WHMIS labels (supplier labels, workplace labels, or other acceptable means of identification as appropriate).
	Ensure that MSDSs are readily accessible to workers.
Workers	Know and understand the information on labels and MSDSs.
	Use the information they receive through education and training to handle controlled products safely.
	Inform employers if labels are illegible or missing.
WCB Prevention staff in B.C.	Administer WHMIS legislation.
	Provide general information about WHMIS to employers and workers.
	Ensure compliance with both federal and provincial WHMIS legislation.

Legislation

WHMIS is enforced by a combination of federal and provincial legislation. Federal legislation requires suppliers/importers of hazardous materials (controlled products) to provide adequate labels and MSDSs as a condition of sale and importation.

Federal, provincial, and territorial Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) legislation requires employers to provide labels, MSDSs, and worker education programs in the workplace.

Hazardous Products Act

<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/H-3/text.html>

[Reference Manual for the WHMIS Requirements of the Hazardous Products Act and Controlled Products Regulations](#)

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Controlled Products Regulations

<http://lois.justice.gc.ca/en/H-3/SOR-88-66/text.html>

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation: Part 5 Chemical and Biological Substances

[5.3 - 5.19 Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System \(WHMIS\)](#)

Education and Training for Workers

Employers must establish an education program for their workers to ensure that workers understand WHMIS and the hazards of the controlled products they work with or near. Education programs about WHMIS must be followed up with job-specific training in safe work procedures for handling, storing, and disposing of these controlled products. Workers must also be trained in emergency procedures in the event of an accident or spill.



Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Online Course

This course teaches proper identification, labeling, and handling of workplace hazardous materials.

Call SHAPE at 604.733.4682 or visit www.shape.bc.ca for more details.

WHMIS Hazard Symbols

There are eight WHMIS hazard symbols. Employers must train workers to recognize these symbols and to know what they mean

	<p>CLASS A: COMPRESSED GAS</p> <p>This class includes compressed gases, dissolved gases, and gases liquefied by compression or refrigeration.</p>
	<p>CLASS B: FLAMMABLE AND COMBUSTIBLE MATERIAL</p> <p>This class includes solids, liquids, and gases capable of catching fire in the presence of a spark or open flame under normal working conditions.</p>

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	<p>CLASS C: OXIDIZING MATERIAL</p> <p>These materials increase the risk of fire if they come in contact with flammable or combustible materials.</p>
	<p>CLASS D: POISONOUS AND INFECTIOUS MATERIAL Division 1: Materials Causing Immediate and Serious Toxic Effects</p> <p>These materials can cause death or immediate injury when a person is exposed to small amounts. Examples: sodium cyanide, hydrogen sulphide</p>
	<p>CLASS D: POISONOUS AND INFECTIOUS MATERIAL Division 2: Materials Causing Other Toxic Effects</p> <p>These materials can cause life-threatening and serious long-term health problems as well as less severe but immediate reactions in a person who is repeatedly exposed to small amounts.</p>
	<p>CLASS D: POISONOUS AND INFECTIOUS MATERIAL Division 3: Biohazardous Infectious Material</p> <p>These materials contain harmful micro-organisms that have been classified into Risk Groups 2, 3, and 4 as determined by the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Medical Research Council of Canada.</p>
	<p>CLASS E: CORROSIVE MATERIAL</p> <p>This class includes caustic and acid materials that can destroy the skin or eat through metals. Examples: sodium hydroxide, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid</p>

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**CLASS F: DANGEROUSLY REACTIVE MATERIAL**

These products may self-react dangerously (for example, they may explode) upon standing or when exposed to physical shock or to increased pressure or temperature, or they emit toxic gas.

Additional References:

WorkSafeBC Regulation & Guidelines for WHMIS

Part 5 Chemical Agents and Biological Agents**[5.3 - 5.19 Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System \(WHMIS\)](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/Part5.asp?ReportID=18022)**

([http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/Part5.asp?ReportID = 18022](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/Part5.asp?ReportID=18022))

[Guidelines G5.3-1 to G5.15 Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System \(WHMIS\)](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/GuidelinePart5.asp?ReportID=19318)

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