

HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS REGISTER



INFORMATION SHEET

April 2012

Overview

This fact sheet provides general guidance for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) on the requirements to prepare and maintain a register of hazardous chemicals at the workplace.

What is a hazardous chemicals register?

A hazardous chemicals register is a list of hazardous chemicals at your workplace, accompanied by the current safety data sheet (SDS) for each of those chemicals.

A hazardous chemicals register is required under the Work Health and Safety Regulations to be prepared and kept up-to-date so that people can easily find information about chemicals stored, handled or used at the workplace.

Since manufacturers and importers of hazardous chemicals are required to update their SDS at least every five years, you will need to obtain a new SDS from the chemical supplier periodically to ensure you have the most up-to-date and current SDS.

Providing access to the hazardous chemicals register

The hazardous chemicals register must be readily accessible to all workers involved in the use, storage and handling of the hazardous chemicals and to anyone else who is likely to be affected by the chemical at the workplace. Registers and SDS may be kept electronically (for example on an intranet) provided workers have ready access to a computer. Otherwise, a hard copy should be kept in the location where chemicals are mostly used.

Which hazardous chemicals must be included on the register?

All hazardous chemicals that are stored, handled or used at the workplace must be listed on the register except where they are:

- in-transit, or
- consumer products.

Hazardous chemicals are in-transit if they are not used in the workplace and are not kept at the workplace for more than five consecutive days. However, where the workplace frequently has in-transit hazardous chemicals present or if they are present in significant quantities, these should be listed on the register.

Consumer products are those that are packed primarily for use by a household consumer and are used in a manner consistent with normal household use. For example, laundry detergent packed in a 1 kg container and used once a week by individual staff for washing work clothes is considered a consumer product and would not need to be included on the register. However, a 30 kg container of the same detergent used by a commercial laundering business is not considered to be a consumer product, and therefore must be included on the register.

Consumer products also include hazardous chemicals used in an office, for example printer toner and whiteboard cleaners.



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Workplaces involving more than one PCBU

There may be instances where more than one PCBU has a responsibility for maintaining a register of hazardous chemicals, for example in an office workplace where external cleaning staff are contracted for cleaning the workplace and where the hazardous chemicals they use for that work are stored on-site.

In this situation, the office workplace is required to maintain a register and have the current SDS for each chemical on the register. This is to ensure that people other than the cleaning staff have access to information about the chemicals in the event of a spillage or exposure, even where the office workers would not normally use the chemicals themselves.

The obligation for the PCBU of the office to maintain a register does not exempt the PCBU of the labour hire firm from its obligations to provide information about the hazardous chemicals to the cleaning workers.

If I have a register, do I need a manifest?

A manifest is required only where hazardous chemicals that are dangerous goods are present at the workplace and where their quantities exceed specified threshold amounts.

A manifest is different to a register, and is intended primarily for emergency services personnel to use where they are required to respond to an emergency situation at the workplace. A manifest is required to contain additional information about hazardous chemicals at the workplace than is in a register, including the hazard classes and categories of the hazardous chemicals and details of the type, size and locations of containers present at the workplace.

For further information about requirements relating to manifests, refer to the Work Health and Safety Regulations.

More Information

More information on managing the risks associated with storage, handling and use of hazardous chemicals at work can be found on our website at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au.