



LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

Practicing Safe Chemical Use

IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY DATA SHEETS

You have probably heard of safety data sheets (SDSs), and if you work with chemicals, hopefully you have been trained by your employer to read them. Every chemical has a unique SDS created by its manufacturer, but the format always includes 16 sections.

Each SDS details important information about that specific chemical. The information includes its product identification, composition or ingredients, identification of hazards to humans and the environment, physical and chemical properties, first-aid measures, fire-fighting measures, and what to do if there is an accidental spill.

SDSs also provide information on how to properly handle, store, transport and dispose of the chemical. They identify personal protective equipment that may be necessary when working with the chemical, and list regulatory requirements that apply to its use.

The Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) requires that SDSs be readily accessible in your work area. Make sure you read and understand the information on the SDS for each chemical you work with. Additionally, most SDSs are available on the internet with a quick search.

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Safe Chemical Use CONTINUED

PREVENTING OVEREXERTION

Employees often experience workplace injuries from overexertion. This is when you strain yourself from pushing your body too hard. Overexertion can result from lifting, pushing or pulling objects that are too heavy for you.

Overexertion can lead to a musculoskeletal disorder, which may include the following symptoms: swelling, numbness, stiffness, chronic pain, or the permanent loss of mobility in muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints.

Overexertion can lead to long-term health consequences, so preventing it is important. Follow these simple practices to prevent overexertion:

- Use correct lifting techniques when lifting a heavy object. *For example: When you lift, face the load with your feet shoulder-width apart and your back straight. Squat by bending at the hips and knees. Then use your legs and stomach muscles to power the lift.*
- Use material-handling aides, like a cart or hand truck, to lift and carry heavy or awkward objects.
- Ask for help instead of trying to “muscle” your way through a job alone.
- Do not add an extra package or box to an already full load; instead, make an extra trip or ask someone to help.
- Do not overextend or reach to grab an item on a shelf; climb down the ladder, reposition it and climb again.
- Arrange your work and your workstation to minimize reaching, bending, twisting and awkward postures.
- Take short breaks when doing strenuous tasks so that you can stretch and relax tense muscles, giving them a chance to recover.

WORKING WITH SOLVENTS

Solvents are liquids and sometimes gases that can dissolve or extract substances. Some of the most common uses of solvents include dissolving grease, oil and paint. They are also used to clean electronics, tools and engines.

The most common solvent is actually water, which is known as the “universal solvent” because it is able to dissolve the largest variety of substances. Water is harmless, but you may be exposed to more toxic solvents like acetone or turpentine in your workplace or at your home.

Here are some tips to remain safe while working with solvents:

- Carefully read and follow all safety instructions.
- Never use a solvent or any chemical from an unlabeled container.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including splash-proof goggles.
- Do not inhale vapors. If someone does, get them to fresh air immediately. If they are not breathing, they should receive immediate medical attention.
- Some solvents can contaminate water supplies, so do not flush them down a drain.

If you have any questions or need assistance regarding workplace safety, please contact your independent insurance agent or the Auto-Owners Loss Control HelpLine at 855.586.5388, or send an email to LossControlSupport@aoins.com.

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