

LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

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Hazard Labels: Environment Pictogram



If you work with chemicals, it is important to know how to read the labels on containers and understand what the symbols mean. Labels provide important information about the chemicals you might be exposed to while doing your job – so pay attention to them. Understanding and using this information can lower your risk of injury.

The environment pictogram is a symbol with a black and white image of a dead fish and a dead tree framed by a red diamond. If you see this pictogram on a chemical label, it means that the chemical will injure or harm aquatic organisms, including fish.

When you see this pictogram be careful and follow the precautionary statements on the label, which will likely include a statement to “avoid release into the environment.” It is important to note that unlike other pictograms, the environment pictogram is not


mandatory. This means not all chemicals that are hazardous to marine life will bear the symbol. As a result, always be cautious and take necessary actions to prevent releasing chemicals into the environment.

For chemicals that do bear the pictogram, detailed information about the hazards of the chemical can be found in the hazard statement on the label and in the safety data sheet (SDS).

The SDS will tell you how to safely handle and store the chemical, and what to do in the event of an accidental release. If a release does occur, report it to your supervisor as soon as possible so action can be taken to prevent the chemical from reaching drains, sewers or waterways.

In addition, chemicals that are toxic to the environment often present hazards to people. The SDS should be referenced to determine what personal protective equipment (PPE) to use when working with the chemical and what to do if you or a coworker are exposed.

If you understand and use the information available about hazardous chemicals, you can minimize the risk to yourself and the environment.



Signs of Complacency

Many workplaces invest heavily in safe work practices, but the risk of injury can still be high due to a less recognized factor: complacency. Even well-trained workers can become comfortable with job risks and get distracted from the task at hand.

Studies show that a brief distraction or loss of focus – just three seconds – doubles the likelihood that workers will commit an error. Even slightly longer distractions – four to five seconds – triple the chances of an error. For highly hazardous tasks, errors can be costly.

THREE TYPES OF AT-RISK BEHAVIORS TO WATCH FOR:

1. **Deliberate:** The easiest to spot, such as intentionally taking a shortcut through a known restricted area.
2. **Unintentional:** For example, inadvertently walking into a restricted area while preoccupied or distracted.
3. **Habitual:** Boredom or a belief that a task is no longer dangerous after it has been done safely many times.

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS:

- Are workers stopping in the middle of tasks to check a cellphone? Do they interrupt one another while performing high-risk activities?
- Look for increases in injuries that indicate inattention or distraction – minor cuts, scrapes, burns and bumps.
- Notice increases in non-injury indicators of complacency, such as problems with product quality or lack of attention to work-area cleanliness.
- Watch for at-risk behaviors, such as taking shortcuts through restricted areas, keeping food in areas with hazardous chemicals, or failing to tightly close lids on containers of flammable liquids.

TAKE ACTION TO STAY ALERT:

- Join your workplace safety committee. Offer ideas to develop safe work practices, productivity or workflows.
- Take any opportunity to cross-train or learn new skills, which will make you a more valuable employee and help to keep you engaged.
- Mentor new workers.
- Help conduct hazard assessments and develop solutions to identified hazards or problems.

Complacency is a hazard that can compromise an otherwise safe workplace. If you or others have relaxed your guard, ask what you can do to bring focus back to the task at hand.

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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