



# SAFETY SHORTS

## HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS HANDLING AND STORAGE

Hazardous chemicals or materials are found in most municipal departments and quasi-municipal entities. Often we do not give these chemicals a second thought until there is an accident. Employees need to know what types of chemicals and associated hazards they are exposed to, how to use them safely, how to protect themselves from exposure, and what to do in the event of an emergency.

**Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)** have information on health hazards, specific physical characteristics of chemicals, protective measures, and precautions for the safe handling, use, and storage of each chemical. Always review the MSDS before using any product!

### Always...

- ⇒ Always use the right personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure that it fits correctly.
- ⇒ Always post warning signs that properly mark the area where a hazardous substance is used or stored.
- ⇒ Always read labels and MSDS to learn special handling procedures prior to working with chemicals.
- ⇒ Mix corrosives or solvents slowly.
- ⇒ Know the location of eyewash stations and safety showers and how to use them.
- ⇒ In the event of accidental exposure know who to contact, first-aid measures, and response and cleanup procedures.
- ⇒ Store solvents in tight, unbreakable containers designed for flammable liquids. (See NFPA 30- Flammable and Combustible Liquids Safety Code, as adopted by the State of Maine).
- ⇒ Ensure storage rooms and work areas are properly ventilated, kept clean and dry and are not subjected to excessive heat or freezing.
- ⇒ Clean up spills promptly.

### Never...

- ⇒ Never work with a hazardous chemical unless you have read the Material Safety Data Sheet and have been properly trained.
- ⇒ Never block eyewash stations, fire extinguishers, fire alarm stations, or exits.
- ⇒ Never sniff a chemical to identify it.
- ⇒ Never wear only a face shield when eye protection is required.
- ⇒ Never use an unidentified chemical.
- ⇒ Never skip safety precautions to get the job done faster.
- ⇒ Never exceed storage conditions recommended in MSDS for each material. (ex: temperature).
- ⇒ Never add water to acids, always add acids to water.
- ⇒ Never smoke around hazardous chemicals.
- ⇒ Never store flammable chemicals near oxidizers or corrosives.
- ⇒ Never store acids with bases.
- ⇒ Never use chemicals past their expiration date.

**Also see the Safety Short – Hazardous Chemical Container Labeling.**