

Key Elements of a Safety Data Sheet

Do you know how to handle chemicals in the workplace safely? Should you use gloves when mixing chemicals? Does this dye mix with that thinning agent? Safety Data Sheets have the answer. Formerly known as “Material Safety Data Sheets”, this binder in every workplace has detailed information on the correct way to clean up spills, store materials properly, and a host of other information.

It is critical that you know where the safety data sheet binder is located in each facility and the proper way to read each sheet. Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with each section of the safety data sheet to reduce the risk of unnecessary injuries.

Section 1: Identification

This section includes product identifier information such as the manufacturer or distributor name, address, phone number; emergency phone number; recommended use for the chemical and; restrictions on use. This is the section to use when labeling secondary containers and understanding the chemicals intended uses.

Section 2: Hazard(s) Identification

This section lists the hazards involved with using the chemical. It is important that you are familiar with this information if you use a chemical on a regular basis.

Section 3: Composition

This section has information on ingredients including the composition and any trade secret claims. Check this section to ensure you are only mixing chemicals that should be mixed.

Section 4: First-aid Measures

If you spill the chemical on your skin or accidentally swallow some of the chemical, this section lists important symptoms/effects and any required treatment.

Section 5: Firefighting Measures

If there is a fire in the facility, the local responding agency needs this section of the safety data sheet to ensure they are fighting the fire with the correct extinguishing techniques and equipment. It also lists possible chemical hazards from a fire.

Section 6: Accidental Release Measures

This section lists emergency procedures to follow in the event of an accidental spill (what types of protective equipment to use, proper methods of containment and cleanup among others).

Section 7: Handling and Storage

This section is for understanding the precautions required for safe handling and storage, including incompatibilities with other chemicals. Some containers/chemicals need to be stored far away from others to avoid accidental cross contamination or mixing.

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Section 8: Exposure Controls/ Personal Protection

See OSHA's list of Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) and other technical information. Read this section to understand the proper types of personal protective equipment (gloves, aprons, dust mask, etc.) to avoid accidental exposure.

Section 9: Physical & Chemical Properties

Find out about a chemical's appearance, odor, physical state, and other technical information.

Section 10: Stability and Reactivity

Do you know if the chemicals you are mixing are compatible? Do they create heat when combined? Are the chemicals stable at the ambient temperature of your facility? This section has the answers for questions related to chemical stability and hazardous reactions.

Section 11: Toxicological Information

This section includes routes of exposure (skin, inhalable risk, eye contact risks) and related symptoms/effects. Avoid accidental exposures to employees with this data.

Section 12: Ecological Information*

This section lists possible risks to the environment for each chemical.

Section 13: Disposal Considerations*

Listed here is more information about proper disposal. For example: "Can I safely pour it down the drain or do I need to call a professional disposal company?"

Section 14: Transport Information*

This section notes any special considerations when transporting the chemical.

Section 15: Regulatory Information*

This section may have information about regulations specific to your chemical.

*Note: Sections 12-15 are "non-mandatory" sections and may not have information for all chemicals in your facility. Do not be alarmed if these sections are blank.

Section 16: Other information

This section includes the date of preparation or last revision. Check this section to ensure you have the most current data.

By making loss control visit(s), evaluations and/ or recommendations, or providing safety materials, Berkshire Hathaway Homestate Companies and this Consultant have not and do not undertake or assume any duty to you or anyone else, including but not limited to: A) Identifying or reporting upon any hazard at your premises; B) Managing, controlling, or correcting any hazard; or C) Enforcing compliance with any local, state, or federal safety or health law. Our recommendations or safety materials may not address every possible loss potential, code violation, or exception to neither good practice nor will compliance with any submitted recommendations guarantee the fulfillment of your obligations as required by any local, state, or federal laws. Loss Control is your management's daily responsibility. You are urged to implement and maintain your safety and health management programs.

Please read the safety data sheets in your facility to ensure you are working with chemicals in the proper way. Please ask your center director if you have any questions.