

Hazard Communication – *The Basics*

Do your employees work with hazardous chemicals?

DID YOU SAY THAT THEY *DON'T*?

What about your cleaning fluids and copier toner cartridges? **What about - White Out*? Windex*? Pledge*? Paint? Roofing tar? Floor wax? Engine oil? Transmission fluid?**

The truth is that we all, almost all of us, work with hazardous chemicals every day. Various day to day things like toner cartridges for your copier and common cleaning fluids can be, in reality, dangerous to your health. They may be harmful to your eyes, skin or even poisonous!

In response to this workplace danger, the Federal Government enacted, as a part of the Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA), a standard called "The Right To Know Standard" or, "**29 CFR 1910.1200 Hazard Communication**" as it is formally known. "Haz Com" (for short) is the OSHA standard that requires **ALL** employers to educate their employees on the dangers of the chemicals that they use each day.

The Haz Com Standard is a detailed document that describes what actions each employer must take in order to protect the workers from chemical dangers. It states,

"The purpose of this (standard) is to ensure that the hazards of all chemicals produced or imported are evaluated, and that information concerning their hazards is transmitted to employers and employees. This transmittal of information is to be accomplished by means of comprehensive hazard communication programs, which are to include container labeling and other forms of warning, material safety data sheets and employee training."

As you can see from this initial statement, the regulation is broken down into a few key categories: container labeling; material safety data sheets (MSDS) and employee training. Also required is a written Haz Com Policy outlining a company's position and procedures for protecting its workers from chemical dangers.

If you haven't already, develop a Hazard Communication program. Make sure that it contains the following important sections:

- A written company Haz Com policy
- Container labeling;
- Material safety data sheets (MSDS) and;
- Employee training

It's a long and detailed governmental document and you would be wise to take a look at it by going to www.osha.gov. It's a good policy to have, especially when you regularly deal with chemicals.