



Safety Data Sheets

Module 1



Health & Safety
Essentials

Registered charity number 207890

Introduction and legal framework

Introduction

Safety Data Sheets (SDS) (previously known as Material Safety Data Sheets, MSDS) are key documents in the safe supply, handling and use of chemicals. They provide a great deal of useful information on the safe use of the chemical or chemical mixture. This includes information on storage, disposal, first aid measures and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

If you work with chemicals it is essential that you are familiar with safety data sheets. You should ensure that you are fully aware with the hazards associated with chemicals that you use. The basic hazard information is provided on the product label and more detailed information is in the SDS. You will also need the information in the SDS to carry out Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and risk assessments. See *Health & Safety Essentials - COSHH* and *Risk Assessment* for more detailed information on how to carry out these assessments.

Suppliers are legally required to provide SDSs for chemicals that are classified as hazardous. Do not begin working with the chemical if you have not received one. If no SDS is available you should go back to the supplier and request one; or check their website as they can often be found online.

The supplier has a duty to compile SDSs "in a clear and concise manner", but unfortunately the supplier does not always meet this criteria. This resource will help you to interpret the information provided in the SDS. It describes the intended content of each section of the SDS and how this will be useful to you as someone who handles chemicals in the laboratory.

Legal Framework

Technical information is critical to the successful management of chemical risks and it has long been a legal requirement through The Health & Safety at Work Act, for the supplier of a substance to provide adequate information about any risks to health or safety and to carry out testing and provide appropriate data.

The specific duty to develop and supply a safety data sheet originally came from domestic legislation, The Chemical (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations, known as CHIP, where the supplier of substances or mixtures meeting the criteria for classification as 'dangerous' had to provide an SDS on first supply.

More recently, it is a duty under the European REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) Regulations to provide Safety Data Sheets when supplying chemicals. The new system also takes into account the changes brought in by the European Classification, labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation in 2009. The CLP regulation is the means by which the United Nations Globally Harmonised System (GHS) will be implemented in the EU. The GHS is a voluntary agreement and is being adopted in Europe to further global consistency in providing chemical safety data.

The SDS must be supplied if the substance or mixture is classified as dangerous under the Dangerous Substances/Preparation Directive or is classified as hazardous under CLP.

The manufacturer, supplier or importer is also required to anticipate 'so far as is reasonably practicable' the uses to which the substance or mixture may be put to, the relevant exposure scenarios and detail on management of risk related to its specific uses. This should be included in the SDS in the relevant sections.

