

### Hazard Communication

#### Understanding the Hazards Around You

Chemicals, such as solvents, paints, and lubricants, are essential for many jobs here at Northwestern but may also pose health and environmental risks if procedures are not followed. In fact, in the past five years, there have been 26 chemical-related injuries here at Northwestern. Northwestern's [Hazard Communication Program](#) (HazCom), enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), ensures your "Right to Know" and "Right to Understand" the hazards in your workplace through labeling, chemical safety data sheets (SDS), and training.



#### Labeling Requirements

All hazardous chemical containers must be labeled. **Primary** (i.e., manufacturer) container labels must include the chemical name, exposure hazards, and precautions for safe handling and storage. When chemicals are transferred from the original container to another (e.g., spray bottle), a **secondary** or "workplace" label must be affixed to the container. Learn more about chemical labeling in Northwestern's HazCom [program](#).



#### Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

**Preparation is Key:** Keep the topic relevant to your work. Work with your team to review an SDS for a chemical commonly used in your department and discuss each section and how it applies to your work.

**Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

**Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

#### Safety Data Sheets

Before using a chemical, review the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) in Northwestern's [online library](#) to learn about safe handling and storage, health hazards, personal protective equipment (PPE), and emergency procedures. If a chemical SDS is not in the library, or there is not an SDS on-site, contact your supervisor or [Environmental Health and Safety](#) (EHS).

#### Using the Right PPE:

While gloves and protective eyewear are common examples of PPE when handling chemicals, always refer to the SDS for specific requirements.

#### Training

According to OSHA, many employees do not understand the health and safety information found in an SDS. To address this issue and to keep you safe, Northwestern EHS provides the following training to ensure you understand the necessary precautions and procedures to follow when handling hazardous chemicals:

- Annual online awareness [training](#) provides topics on understanding SDS information, labeling requirements, and interpreting chemical container labels.
- Annual HazCom coordinator training is for select staff, assigned by their supervisor, who are responsible for ensuring department chemicals are correctly labeled and inventories are maintained.

**Learn more:** Review OSHA's [HazCom](#) and [Safety Data Sheets](#) resources

**Report all injuries:** [Online](#) or call (847) 491-5582

#### Safety at Home

Chemicals commonly found at home (e.g., bleach, cleaners, and paints) can cause injury to your family. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that over 500 children are treated every day for chemical exposure poisoning. Below are some tips to keep your family safe:

- Products with strong fumes like chlorine bleach should only be used in well-ventilated areas
- Keep chemicals on high shelves or locked in cabinets, out of reach of children
- Do not store flammable or combustible chemicals such as gasoline near a furnace or water heater, as fumes can escape and cause a potential fire

**For Additional Information** Contact Environmental Health and Safety at [ehs@northwestern.edu](mailto:ehs@northwestern.edu)

*Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Environmental Health and Safety for details.*