



Control of Hazardous Substances Toolbox Talk

Hazardous substances are used in many primary industries and construction. If these substances are not controlled properly, they can have significant health and safety consequences for workers.

What is a Hazardous Substance?

A hazardous substance is any product or chemical that has the following properties:

- Explosive – explodes or causes explosions
- Flammable – ignites easily and burns rapidly
- Oxidizing – could be gaseous, solid, or liquid and can cause or intensify fire and explosion
- Toxic – can harm people if it enters the body through contact, ingestion, inhalation.
- The effects can be mild to life threatening and can be immediate or long term.
- Corrosive – can cause skin burns and eye damage
- Ecotoxic - toxic to the environment
- The Globally Harmonized System GHS of pictograms can help you identify substances that may harm you or others. Look for these pictograms on packaging and container labels.

Risk Assessment of Hazardous Substances

- Consider worker exposure to hazardous substances and check exposure by monitoring if there is doubt
- Where possible, eliminate or substitute the hazardous substances
- Minimize exposure by applying isolation or engineering controls
- If risk remains, put administrative controls in place
- If risk remains, make sure fitted personal protective equipment PPE is provided and used.

Control Measures of Hazardous Substances

- Create an inventory of hazardous substances
- Have the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all hazardous substances and make them accessible to workers
- Inform and train workers before using any hazardous substances
- Store in suitable containers and label them correctly



- Store hazardous substances safely - where and how they are stored depends on the type of substance and the quantity
- Install signs – place clearly visible signs at entranceways, on buildings and outdoor areas where substances are used or stored.
- Never mix hazardous substances unless you know what you are doing
- Always clean up any spillages and dispose of the hazardous waste as documented in the SDS

Plan For an Emergency

If using hazardous substances, an emergency plan should be developed and include:

- How to address all foreseeable emergencies
- Inventory of hazardous substances
- Site plan with all hazardous substance's locations
- Training of staff on how to correctly wear PPE
- First aid – know where wash stations are and how to treat people who may be harmed or injured
- Procedure to contact emergency services
- Procedure to manage the area – restrict exposure to initial area, reduce severity and if possible, eliminate it.

Hazardous Substance DON'TS

If using hazardous substances, an emergency plan should be developed and include:

- Do not smoke, drink, or eat when working with or handling hazardous substances
- Do not expose others to fumes, dusts, gas or other dangers from hazardous substances when you work
- Do not use a hazardous substance you are not trained to use
- Do not leave hazardous substances around a work site – store them straight away
- Do not use any hazardous substances that are not labelled
- Do not store hazardous substances above head height

Key takeaways:

- Be prepared for any foreseeable emergencies
- Train your staff to correctly handle and use hazardous substances
- Store and label containers correctly
- Conduct a risk assessment before using a hazardous substance