Hazardous chemicals toolbox talk

Health · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

Building sites use a lot of chemicals: solvents, primers, waterproofing, adhesives, form oil, acids for cleaning brickwork, paint and fuel. Some burn the skin, some damage the lungs or eyes, and some catch fire easily. South Africa's Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents require the employer to get the safety data sheet for each product and to train people to read labels and sheets before they use the product.

SAY THIS

Know what is in the tin
Before you open any tin, drum or bottle, read the label. Look for the warning pictures in the red diamonds and the signal word: 'Danger' is more serious than 'Warning'. The label tells you what the product can do to you and what precautions to take. If there is no label, or you cannot read it, do not use it. Ask the supervisor first.

The safety data sheet
Every hazardous product comes with a safety data sheet, called the SDS. It has sixteen sections. The ones you need most are section 2, the hazards; section 4, first aid; section 7, handling and storage; and section 8, the protective equipment to wear. Our safety data sheets are kept in the site file. If you are not sure what a product needs, ask to see its sheet before you start.

Never decant into cooldrink bottles
Never pour thinners, acid or fuel into a cooldrink or water bottle. Someone will drink it, and children at home are especially at risk. If you must decant, use a proper container with the right label on it. Keep lids closed when you are not pouring, so fumes do not build up and nothing spills.

Air, skin and fire
Use solvents, primers and adhesives in fresh air where you can. Inside a small room, open the windows and doors, and stop if you feel dizzy or get a headache. Wear the gloves and eye protection the SDS asks for. Many of these products burn easily, so no smoking, grinding or welding near them. Wash your hands before you eat or smoke.

Spills and waste
If something spills, keep people away, stop the leak if it is safe, and soak it up with sand or absorbent. Do not wash it into a drain or into the ground. Empty containers and soaked rags still hold chemical: put them in the marked waste bin, not the general skip, and never burn them.

If someone is affected
If chemical gets on skin or in the eyes, or someone breathes in fumes and feels ill, call the first aider straight away. Get them into fresh air. Take the product's label or SDS with you to the first aider, the clinic or the ambulance, so they know exactly what it was. Report every exposure, even if it seems minor.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Which chemicals are on site today, and are they all in labelled containers?
- [ ] Where is the SDS file, and does it have a sheet for every product we are using this week?
- [ ] Are any chemicals in cooldrink bottles, buckets or unmarked tins? Remove them now.
- [ ] Is the chemical store locked, ventilated and away from heat, sparks and the site office?
- [ ] Is there absorbent or sand for spills, and a marked bin for empty tins and rags?
- [ ] Do we have the gloves and eye protection that section 8 of each SDS asks for?

ASK THE CREW

- ? Which product on this site do you think is the most dangerous, and why?
- ? Has a chemical ever made you feel ill or burnt your skin? What happened?
- ? Can you show me on a label where it says what protective equipment to use?
- ? What would you do first if a drum leaked in the back of the bakkie?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Chemical-resistant gloves of the type named in section 8 of the SDS · Safety glasses or goggles; a face shield when pouring acids or corrosives · Respirator where the SDS calls for one · Overalls with long sleeves

THE LAW

Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents (Government Notice R. 280 of 29 March 2021), regulation 14A: Safety data sheet; Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents (Government Notice R. 280 of 29 March 2021), regulation 14B: Labelling of hazardous chemical agents; Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents (Government Notice R. 280 of 29 March 2021), regulation 3: Information, instruction and training; Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents (Government Notice R. 280 of 29 March 2021), regulation 4: Duties of persons who may be exposed to hazardous chemical agents. What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/hazardous-chemicals/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Hazardous chemicals and safety data sheets

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	COMPANY OR TRADE	SIGNATURE
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Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.