



# Pay Attention to Chemical Warning Labels

Warning labels, found on all containers of hazardous chemicals in the workplace, provide much **of** the information you **need** to know to **use** hazardous chemicals safely. Understanding warning labels will help **you** handle **and** use these chemicals properly and avoid health **and** safety problems in the workplace.

## What's on a Warning Label

All warning labels show the **name** of the chemical; the name, address and phone number of the manufacturer **or** importer; and the chemical code number. All warning labels will contain one of **three signal words** that indicate **just** how dangerous the chemical is. *Warning* indicates a greater hazard than *Caution* does, while *Danger* indicates the highest level **of** hazard. Highly toxic chemicals will be labeled *Poison*.

The label will also contain information about physical hazards—if the chemical is flammable, explosive, corrosive and *so* forth. Health **hazard**

information will list such dangers **as** eye, lung and skin irritation, burns or systemic illnesses.

## Other Information

Warning labels may also tell **you** how to store and dispose of the chemical properly: the type of container **needed**, how to dispose of chemicals and containers. The label may indicate precautions to take, such **as** how to clean **up**, what personal protection equipment to use with the chemical, and how to handle leaks **or** **spills**. First-aid instructions may include antidotes for poisons **and** what steps to take when someone is exposed to the chemical.

## Make Sure It's Labeled

Making certain that hazardous materials are properly labeled is a responsibility that all employees must share. Labels are required on all stationary containers. If you find a container with **no** label or with a torn or illegible label, report it to **your** supervisor immediately. Don't attempt to **use** or handle the chemical until you know for



sure what it is. If you're carrying hazardous chemicals in a portable container that someone else might **use**, **you** should label the container to ensure the **safety of** other workers.

## Read the Label—Each Time

When health and **safety** **are** at stake, it pays to double-check. Always read the label whenever **you use** any hazardous chemical. Although you may **have used** the **same** chemical **many** times, the manufacturer **may** have changed the **formula**, or provided the wrong concentration. Avoid identifying chemicals by the label's color or design

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alone. If the label raises any questions in **your** mind about the appropriateness **of your** environment and protective equipment to deal with the hazardous chemical, **check** company policy or consult your supervisor before using the chemical. Taking responsibility for knowing the contents of chemical containers protects not only you, but also **every** other employee at your place of work. ☐