

Material Safety Data Sheets available online

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employees in health care can now find out, quickly and easily, about the chemicals and other products they work with, and the risks and/or hazards the products might pose. Workers have the "right to know" the nature and make-up of the chemicals they use or come into contact with on the job, the risks they pose, and the precautions to take. The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is part of a Canada-wide approach to the workers' right to know.

WHMIS requires availability of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs.) Health care workers across the province can now access Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) by logging onto the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare website (www.ohsah.bc.ca). OHSAH has created a provincial database, so that MSDSs can be stored, updated, and delivered electronically via the OHSAH website.

The majority of the health authorities have manual systems in place to update MSDSs, and it takes a lot of time to track down new products and update existing information. This involves contacting suppliers about existing and new products, and updating this information base every three years, as required by law.

MSDSpro Enterprise, an existing MSDS software package, has been piloted by OSHA. OHSAH has worked closely with MSDSpro Enterprise and with the piloting health authorities to get the web-based MSDS system up and running. A link on the OHSAH homepage (www.ohsah.bc.ca) takes the user to the web-based MSDS system homepage. The first page gives a little history behind the project, explains how the database is set up, and gives instructions on how to use the database.

An employee can search the website by product or health authority, simply by typing in product names. The page also has a link that takes the user to an "MSDS Request Form," where you can request information about a new product. Simply answer a set of questions, such as product name, manufacturer name, etc. This form is automatically submitted to OHSAH for input into the MSDSpro database.

The web page also has a link to a "Feedback Form," which is forwarded to OHSAH. This way, appropriate changes and updates can be made to the MSDS system to make it more effective for use of health care workers. Make your workplace a healthier place to work ... just follow the links! 

This article is courtesy of the [Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare](#). OHSAH is a bipartite agency created in 1998 in an Accord between management and union representatives. The agency's mandate is to reduce workplace injuries and illness in health care workers and get injured workers back on the job quickly and safely.

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