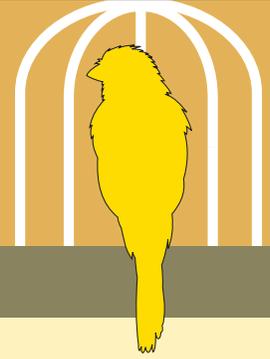


WHMIS



HEALTH AND SAFETY FACT SHEET

CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees

What is WHMIS?

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is a Canada-wide system designed to give employers and workers information on hazardous materials in the workplace.

Why was WHMIS created?

WHMIS was created to reduce injury and disease by communicating specific health and safety information about controlled products so that the information can be used to reduce exposure to hazardous materials.

Is WHMIS a law?

Yes. WHMIS became law through a combination of federal, provincial and territorial legislation that became effective October 31, 1988.

Which materials are covered under WHMIS?

Hazardous materials covered by WHMIS are referred to as “controlled products,” and are grouped in categories of materials called “classes.” These classes are as follows:

- compressed gases
- flammable and combustible materials
- oxidizing materials
- poisonous and infectious materials
- corrosive materials
- dangerously reactive materials

Acts and regulations covering WHMIS in each federal and provincial jurisdiction:

British Columbia	Workers' Compensation Act, Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, Part 5
Alberta	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 29
Saskatchewan	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, Part XXII
Manitoba	Workplace Safety and Health Regulation, Part 35
Ontario	Occupational Health and Safety Act, WHMIS Regulation R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 860
Quebec	Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety, Regulation Respecting Information on Controlled Products
New Brunswick	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulation
Nova Scotia	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulations
Prince Edward Island	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations
Newfoundland	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulations
Yukon Territories	Occupational Health and Safety Act, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations
Northwest Territories & Nunavut	Safety Act, Work Site Hazardous Materials Information System Regulations
Federal Sector	Canada Labour Code, Canadian Occupational Safety and Health Regulations (Part X)

How is information to be provided under WHMIS?

There are three ways that information on hazardous materials is to be provided:

1. Product labels

Suppliers are required to provide cautionary labels on all controlled products as a condition of sale and import into Canada. By law the minimum content required on a supplier label is:

- a product identifier
- a supplier identifier
- hazard symbols
- reference to the MSDS (see below)
- risk phrases
- precautionary measures
- first aid measures

2. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is a document that is prepared by the supplier or manufacturer of the material that contains information on the potential hazards (health, fire, reactivity and environmental), and how to work safely with hazardous materials. It also contains information on the use, storage, handling and emergency procedures related to the hazards of the material. In Canada, every material that is controlled by WHMIS must have an accompanying MSDS. Employers are required to make MSDSs readily available to all workers, and to keep them up to date (no more than 3 years old). A copy of the MSDS should be stored with the accompanying hazardous material. It is also a good idea to file a copy of all MSDSs in a binder to be kept in a central area that is accessible by all workers at all times.

3. Worker education

Any and all workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials in their jobs must receive training regarding the hazards of these materials and the WHMIS system. Specific WHMIS education and training requirements are regulated by each occupational health and safety jurisdiction.

Are there any hazardous materials not included in WHMIS?

Yes. There are nine categories of materials that are not covered by WHMIS. While most of these materials will not require an MSDS, you should check if the manufacturer has produced one. Often times you can get an MSDS for a non-controlled product, which is good information to have in the workplace. Remember, if you can't get an MSDS, it is a good idea to look at the ingredients of the material to determine if it is dangerous. Your regional health and safety representative can help look up information on chemicals if you don't know what they are or can't find any information.

Hazardous materials not covered under WHMIS are:

- consumer restricted products, such as products sold to people in regular stores in consumer-sized packaging, and that are already labelled (following the rules of the Hazardous Products Act)
- explosives (as defined by the Explosives Act)
- cosmetics, drugs, food or devices (as defined by the Food and Drug Act)
- pest control products such as pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, etc. (as defined by the Pest Control Products Act)
- radioactive materials (as defined by the Nuclear Safety and Control Act)
- wood and products made of wood
- a manufactured article, such as a car battery or a mercury thermometer
- tobacco or products made of tobacco
- hazardous wastes

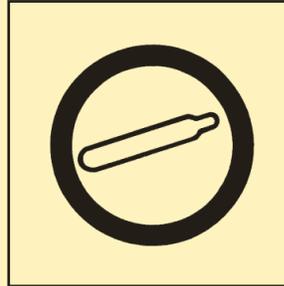
What about products imported from outside of Canada?

WHMIS is Canada's national hazard communication standard. A number of countries have implemented similar systems; however, they differ to varying degrees. Canadian importers of WHMIS controlled products are required to obtain or prepare proper labelling and an MSDS in accordance with Canadian Controlled Product regulations before the controlled product is used or sold. Since 1992, Canada has been working with other countries to harmonize existing hazard communication systems on chemicals in order to develop a single, globally harmonized system, which would standardize classes, labels and MSDSs around the world. The system is known as the Globally Harmonized System (GHS).

It is unclear how long it will take the Canadian and provincial governments to fully implement GHS.

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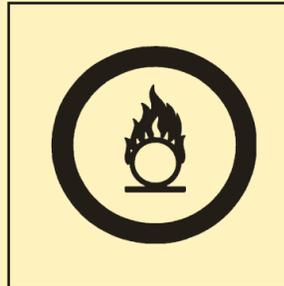
WHMIS hazard symbols



Class A
Compressed Gas



Class B
Flammable and combustible material



Class C
Oxidizing material



Class D-1
Materials causing immediate and serious toxic effects



Class D-2
Materials causing other toxic effects



Class D-3
Biohazardous infectious material



Class E
Corrosive material



Class F
Dangerously reactive material

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