

Army *Safety* Gram

Leading on the Edge for Safety *Excellence*

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Know the Chemicals You Work With



You don't have to be working in an industrial setting to be harmed by chemicals. If you work in an office around a photocopier or if you work around solvents in a print shop, you are working with potentially harmful chemicals.

Know the chemicals you work with. There is lots of information available. You should read the container label carefully. It will give you important information about the chemical, including first aid advice.

For further and more detailed information, find and read the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) on a particular chemical. If you do not understand the MSDS, ask your supervisor to go over it with you.

Chemicals should be labeled and stored according to the manufacturer's instructions. They should be in recommended containers, clearly marked and kept in specially designated, well ventilated approved storage areas. Incompatible chemicals should be stored away from each other because of chemical reactions they could cause. Certain combinations might cause toxic gases, fires, or explosions.

Some chemicals require you wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to guard against exposure. This might involve certain types of body protection, footwear, gloves, eye protection or respirators. Your supervisor can instruct on the right kind of PPE for the chemicals you handle. When in doubt, check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). Do not handle or mix chemicals unless you are qualified and permitted to do so.

Make sure you follow all instructions and safety precautions precisely.

Know which chemicals are flammable and keep them away from all sources of ignition. This includes matches, electrical circuits, sparks from mechanical processes and pilot lights.

Become familiar with what to do in chemical emergencies. Know the proper procedure to clean up chemicals when they spill: know how to put out a chemical fire.

You should know the location and procedures to use eyewash and safety shower stations in case you or someone else is exposed to chemicals. Ask your supervisor for information and training.



If you know the safety precautions for working with workplace chemicals, you will protect yourself from harm. Take the time to become informed about the substances you work with, the right PPE to wear, the right way to handle chemicals, and what to do in case of chemical emergencies.