

3 WHMIS

Frequently construction trades are required to work with new hazardous materials or previously installed hazardous materials requiring repair, maintenance, or removal. Some materials used for many years and thought to be harmless are now known to be hazardous.

Proper handling requires careful planning, training, and use of personal protective equipment or controls.

Some hazardous materials common in construction are

- compressed gas (acetylene, nitrogen, oxygen)
- flammable and combustible materials (solvents)
- oxidizing materials (epoxy hardeners)
- solvents, coatings, and sealers
- asbestos and silica
- acids and alkalis.

Right to Know

The **Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)** gives everyone the right to know about the hazards of materials they work with and provides the means to find out that information. It does this through

- labels
- material safety data sheets
- worker training and education.

All employers are required by law to provide WHMIS training for specific controlled products the worker will be working with or near. Training should be provided as new products are introduced – with a general updating on new products at least annually.

Controlled products under WHMIS include six classes, identified by symbols (Figure 6).

The requirements for supplier and workplace labels are shown in Figure 7.









CLASS SYMBOL	EXAMPLE
Class A: Compressed Gas	 oxygen
Class B: Flammable and Combustible Material	 acetone
Class C: Oxidizing Material	 chromic acid
Class D: Poisonous and Infectious material	
1. Materials causing immediate and serious toxic effects	 ammonia
2. Materials causing other toxic effects	 asbestos
3. Biohazardous Infectious Material	 contaminated blood products
Class E: Corrosive Material	 hydrochloric acid sodium hydroxide
Class F: Dangerously Reactive Material	 acetylene

Figure 6

Supplier labels are required on controlled products with a volume of more than 100 millilitres and must include

- product identifier
- appropriate hazard symbol(s)
- risk phrases (such as “dangerous if inhaled”)
- precautions (such as “wear rubber gloves”)
- first aid measures
- supplier identifier
- statement that a material safety data sheet (MSDS) is available for the product.

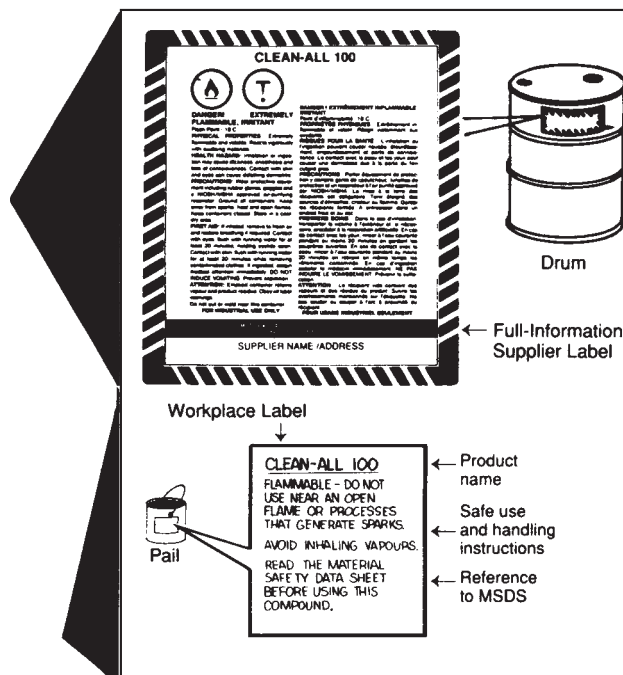


Figure 7

Workplace labels are required when controlled products are produced onsite or have been transferred from a supplier-labelled container to a different container. Workplace labels must include

- product identifier
- safe handling instructions
- statement that an MSDS is available for the product.

If details on the ingredients, health effects, handling, and other aspects of a hazardous product are not available from suppliers or employers, call the Infrastructure Health & Safety Association at 1-800-781-2726 and provide the following information.

- Product name (for example, Solvex 100)
- Manufacturer's name and place of manufacture (for example, ABC Chemical, Montreal, Quebec)
- What is the product being used for? (for example, to clean parts)
- How is it being used? (for example, sprayed on)
- Is it being mixed with something else?
- Is it being heated?
- In what area is it being used? (for example, outdoors or in a holding tank)
- What does the label say?
- How can information be conveyed to you?

Designated Substances

“Designated substances” are substances that have been targeted for special regulation by the Ministry of Labour. Generally these substances are well-known toxic materials which present serious risk of illness.

Designated substances encountered in construction include asbestos, lead, coal tar products, and silica. If any designated substances are present where construction, maintenance, or renovation is planned, the parties involved must be notified and informed.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requires that owners notify contractors of the presence of any designated substance. Contractors also have a responsibility to advise subcontractors. This notification must take place before binding contracts are arranged.

For more information on designated substances, contact the Ministry of Labour.