

SDS - Chemical Labels and SDSs Go Together

[This is the tenth and final module explaining changes in OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard. Note that the new Safety Data Sheets are mandatory for pesticides, as well as non-pesticide hazardous chemicals in the workplace. OSHA's label changes apply only to non-pesticide hazardous chemicals. See Techletter, July 7, 2013 for the introduction to OSHA's training requirements for technicians. A 20 question review exam is included with this issue.]

Each hazardous chemical has a label and a corresponding Safety Data Sheet (SDS). The two go together, but each provides somewhat different information. A label for a hazardous chemical or a pesticide provides the user with condensed, easily accessible information on the potential hazards of that chemical. But labels are limited by their design in the amount and the type of information they can provide. Safety Data Sheets, on the other hand, are the complete reference for detailed information on that product and provide information on its properties, use, and storage that goes above and beyond the label.

The Safety Data Sheet for each chemical provides more detail on technical data and medical toxicity, among other things. For example, say that after using a pesticide, you notice a strange tingling sensation in your hands. The product label just says, "Do not get on skin." But when you check the SDS for the product, under the *Hazard(s) Identification* section, it says "Skin exposures may cause a skin sensation called paresthesia, which is usually described as tingling, itching, burning..." The *First-aid Measures* section of the SDS tells you how to treat the condition.

By law, a manufacturer of a hazardous chemical must provide its Safety Data Sheet to their customers as required by OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard. Employers, in turn, are required to provide the SDS to any employee who may be exposed to that chemical on the job. Many pest control companies also provide Safety Data Sheets to their customers for pesticides used; some states require it.

Communicating Hazard Information to Your Customer - The SDS that your company has for a certain pesticide may be information for the concentrated product if that is what you are mixing. But it can be misleading and alarming if you hand this same SDS to your customer. The dilution must be considered when reading about the hazards of the concentrate. Be sure to explain that the product you are using is a very diluted solution of this concentrate and, consequently, the hazards are diluted, too. Some manufacturers have more appropriate residential dilution SDSs available for customers. When possible, also provide customer information from the manufacturer that helps to explain any potential hazards of the product.

