

# Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS)

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is a national system providing information on hazardous materials (e.g. controlled products) used in the workplace.

There are three components of WHMIS:

- **Worker Education** – to ensure an understanding of the hazards and work procedures
- **Labels** – supplier and workplace
- **Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)**

Employers are required to meet the three components of WHMIS for all controlled products used, stored or handled at a workplace. Controlled products include:

- Compressed gas
- Flammable and combustible materials
- Oxidizing materials
- Poisonous and infectious materials
- Corrosive materials
- Dangerously reactive materials

Some hazardous materials are dealt with under other laws. These products include:

- Pest control products – Pest Control Products Act
- Drugs or food – Drug and Food Act
- Consumer products – Consumer Product Safety Act

**Hazardous waste** (e.g. manure) must be identified on the farm, and workers must be trained about its safe handling and storage.

## Worker Education

Employers must ensure that all employees working with or in proximity to a controlled product are properly trained and educated using an appropriately developed and implemented training program.

*NOTE: The WHMIS Regulations **do not** require training from an outside party. Training can be done on farm, provided the person conducting the training has the appropriate knowledge (i.e. knowledge of the regulations, WHMIS and products at the workplace).*

Employers must ensure that training programs result in employees having the ability to apply the information as necessary. The training program must be reviewed at least annually, or as necessary, to ensure it meets the current requirements of the farm.

A proper training program must include:

- Explanation of supplier and workplace labels, including their content and purpose.
- Explanation of MSDS, including their content and purpose.
- Procedures for safe use, storage, handling and disposal of controlled products.
- Procedures to follow if hazardous emissions are present.
- Procedures to follow in case of an emergency involving a controlled product.
- Explanation of all labeling and coding used at the workplace.

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## Labels

Farmers should be familiar with two types of labels: supplier labels and workplace labels.

### SUPPLIER LABELS

Supplier labels must be on the product container when received. It must remain on the container and have the seven (7) required components and a hatched border. If the supplier label is mistakenly removed or becomes illegible, the employer is responsible for replacing it with another label from the supplier or with a workplace label. If a controlled product is received in bulk or in multiple containers, the employer is responsible for ensuring that all containers have workplace labels.



Image source: Health Canada

### WORKPLACE LABELS

Workplace labels are used in situations as mentioned above and when product is transferred from one container to another at a workplace (e.g. oil is transferred from a drum to a smaller container for easy use). There are three necessary components (See sample, below). The only time a workplace label is not required is when the product is used immediately or on that shift by the same employee.

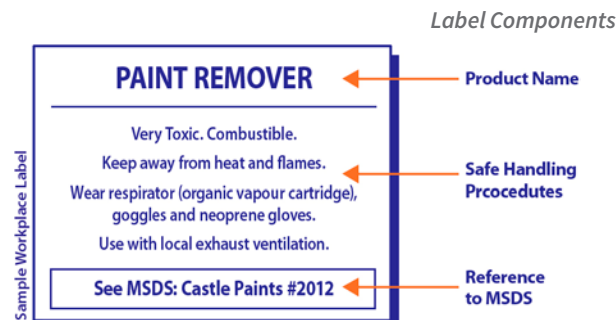


Image source: Health Canada

## PLACARDS

Placards can be used in place of a workplace label when the controlled product:

- Is not in a container.
- Is stored in an area that has restricted entry (i.e. for authorized personnel only).
- Is identified through colour coding or labeling known by employees.
- Is not removed from the placarded area.

Piping systems and vessels (e.g. process or reaction vessel, piping system with valve, conveyor belt) do not require workplace labels. However, piping systems and vessels must be labeled in a manner that is understood by all employees at the workplace (e.g. colour coding, pictures, labels).

## Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)

Farmers are responsible for obtaining all the required Material Safety Data Sheets for controlled products. The MSDS should be obtained from the supplier of the product.

All MSDS must be updated every 3 years or when further hazardous information on the product is made available. The MSDS should be available to employees at all times during the work day, while they are handling or in proximity to a controlled product.

If you are unable to get an MSDS for a controlled product (i.e. supplier is no longer in business) you must do everything practical to ensure you have all the appropriate information on that controlled product (e.g. contact the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [www.ccohs.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca))

### DISCLAIMER:

This fact sheet is a general overview for information purposes only. Farmers must reference legislation to ensure compliance.