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1. What is a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?

A material safety data sheet (MSDS) provides information on potentially hazardous chemicals for people, usually in the workplace, who may be exposed to the hazardous chemical products must provide an MSDS for each chemical substance supplied, whether it is a 50L drum of mortar cleaner from a building site or a 5L bottle of bleach from a local DIY store or a 5L bottle of bleach from a local DIY store. The MSDS will have some information on the container; it is always good to read the instructions before using something, especially when it may be hazardous. An MSDS is a more complete information pack that goes with the product than you can fit onto the side of a small container.

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2. MSDS and Risk Assessment

The MSDS provides information on the hazards associated with the chemical product and this information can then be used by the employer to assess the risk for the use of those chemicals. The MSDS will describe the hazards associated with the chemical product and will also describe the measures in case of an accident or emergency. The MSDS can then guide them when creating a risk assessment for the use of that chemical in their particular work place. The MSDS also contains a fundamental risk assessment itself but the information it contains is a fundamental risk assessment. It is important to remember that the MSDS can cause serious burns to the skin if not used correctly. The correct use of PPE – which is described in the MSDS – can avoid these risks. The MSDS and doing the risk assessment.

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3. An MSDS will contain the following information:

- 3.1 Identification of the chemical product
  - 3.1.1 Name of the chemical product
  - 3.1.2 Name, address and telephone number of the supplier (including an emergency contact number)
- 3.2 Composition/information on the chemical product
  - 3.2.1 Sufficient information to identify the risks associated with it
- 3.3 Hazard(s) identification
  - 3.3.1 Hazards to health and safety
  - 3.3.2 Adverse health effects

manufacturer  
of the supplier (including an emergency contact number)

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order to identify the risks associated with it

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- 3.4 First-aid measures
  - 3.4.1 Whether immediate first aid is required
  - 3.4.2 Symptoms and effects, including delayed effects
  - 3.4.3 Specific information on routes of entry into the body
  - 3.4.4 Whether product is particularly hazardous

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- 3.5 Fire-fighting measures
  - 3.5.1 Suitable extinguishing media
  - 3.5.2 Any extinguishing media not to be used
  - 3.5.3 Hazards that may be caused by fire or explosion – gases or fumes etc.
  - 3.5.4 Any special precautions for fire-fighters

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- 3.6 Accidental release measures
  - 3.6.1 Personal protective equipment, such as eye protection, gloves, boots, and full body protection, provision of adequate ventilation
  - 3.6.2 Environmental precautions, such as keeping away from drains, the need to alert authorities
  - 3.6.3 Methods for containment, such as 'do not use' or 'do not touch' or 'do not breathe' or 'do not ingest' or 'do not inhale' or 'do not swallow' or 'do not touch' or 'do not breathe' or 'do not ingest' or 'do not inhale'

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- 3.7 Handling and storage
  - 3.7.1 Advice on technical measures, such as local or general ventilation
  - 3.7.2 Measures to be taken to avoid or reduce the risk of exposure to aerosols, vapours or dusts, such as the use of appropriate personal protective equipment, avoidance of any aerosol
  - 3.7.3 Any design requirements for storage rooms
  - 3.7.4 Information on the need for special storage conditions
  - 3.7.5 Any special requirements for containers

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- 3.8 Exposure controls/personal protection
  - 3.8.1 Any engineering controls, such as reference to PPE
  - 3.8.2 Where PPE is required, such as type of gloves, goggles, barrier cream

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- 3.9 Physical and chemical properties
  - 3.9.1 What does it look like? (colour, odour, solid, liquid, powder etc?)
  - 3.9.2 Is there an odour threshold?
  - 3.9.3 Boiling point, melting point, flash point, auto-ignition temperature, etc. (physical properties, solubility etc.)
- 3.10 Stability and reactivity
  - 3.10.1 Conditions to avoid, such as temperature extremes, pressure, light etc.
  - 3.10.2 Materials to avoid, such as acids, alkalis etc.
  - 3.10.3 Any hazardous reactions, such as on decomposition

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- 3.11 Toxicological information
  - 3.11.1 Toxicological information that comes into contact with a person
  - 3.11.2 And carcinogenicity or reproduction etc.
  - 3.11.3 Acute or chronic toxicity

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- 3.12 Ecological information
  - 3.12.1 Short and long term effects on the environment
  - 3.12.2 Toxicity to plants and animals
  - 3.12.3 Longevity in the environment

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- 3.13 Disposal considerations
  - 3.13.1 Appropriate disposal methods (landfill, incineration etc.)
- 3.14 Transport information
  - 3.14.1 Any special precautions for connection with transporting the material
  - 3.14.2 Any references to international Carriage of Dangerous Goods

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- 3.15 Regulatory information
  - 3.15.1 Any health and safety regulations such as CHIP 2009 (Chemicals (Hazard Information and Supply) Regulations.) reference may also be made to HASAW 1974
- 3.16 Other information
  - 3.16.1 Training advice or restrictions, sources of key data used to produce the MSDS

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- 4. To do your COSHH risk assessment you need to have the relevant MSDS to hand. Then you follow the steps:
  - 4.1 You look for the hazards
  - 4.2 Decide who will be exposed
  - 4.3 Look at any control measures and assess them if necessary
  - 4.4 Record your findings
  - 4.5 Review

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- 5. The main difference with a COSHH risk assessment is that you will have most if not all the answers on the MSDS. If you get stuck you can always call the technical contact phone number. If you get stuck on the MSDS.