

# You Have a Right to Know

**ABOUT HAZARDOUS  
CHEMICALS  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

***Don't Be Puzzled By It. Learn About It.  
Your Health and Safety Matter!***



**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY  
BUREAU OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION • HEALTH & SAFETY DIVISION**

Today, chemicals play an important role in everyone's life. Chemicals are used in your home and in your workplace, and they are found throughout your community.

While we should appreciate the benefits of these substances, we must also be aware of the hazards they may pose.

## **WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?**

Because hazardous chemicals are used more every day, the potential for exposure to these hazardous chemicals is increasing, and the possibility of an accidental release of hazardous chemicals into our communities or ill health effects is significantly greater today.

By their very nature, many hazardous chemicals have been found to be potentially dangerous to the public health and the environment. Justifiably, citizens are concerned about the possibility of accidents or exposure to hazardous chemicals.

## **WHAT DOES RIGHT TO KNOW MEAN?**

As a Pennsylvania citizen or someone who lives or works in Pennsylvania, you have the right to know about hazardous chemical use by employers in your community.

Your right to know is protected by a law known as the Pennsylvania Worker and Community Right to Know Act. In passing this act, the legislature recognized that, due to current technology, the creation, use and storage of hazardous chemicals is essential in the operation of modern industries.

The legislature also recognized that Pennsylvania residents have a right to know information about the risks of exposure to hazardous chemicals so that they may make reasonable decisions and take informed actions regarding their living conditions. This information can also help emergency response organizations, such as local fire departments, adequately plan for and respond to emergencies.

# **WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYERS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COMMUNITY?**

Employers have the responsibility to disclose specific information in regard to hazardous chemicals in their workplaces.

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Workers Compensation, Health & Safety Division, administers an inquiry, complaint and enforcement system to respond to community requests for information and to act as a data collector between the employer and the community.

Upon the written request of any person living or working in the commonwealth, the department will obtain the following information:

## **The Hazardous Substance Survey Form**

This form is an inventory which lists hazardous chemicals found in a particular workplace and must be updated annually by April 1 of each year for the prior calendar year.

## **The Environmental Hazard Survey Form**

This form provides information regarding those hazardous chemicals emitted, discharged or disposed of from the workplace which are designated by the Department of Labor & Industry as environmental hazards and for which information is required under other existing federal, state or local laws.

## **Material Safety Data Sheets/Safety Data Sheets**

These documents are prepared by manufacturers, suppliers or importers. They provide details on a chemical, including physical dangers, safety procedures, types of health effects, common routes of exposure, workplace exposure limits and emergency response techniques.

## WHEN SHOULD I EXERCISE MY RIGHTS?

You should exercise your rights whenever you have questions about chemical hazards in your community. For example, you may use your rights to:

- Discover which types of herbicides are sprayed along the roads where you live;
- Discover what is being emitted from a smokestack of a factory near your home;
- Discover the health impacts from chemical exposure in the workplace.

## WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT TO EXERCISE MY RIGHTS?

As a community member, you may contact the

Bureau of Workers' Compensation,  
Health & Safety Division at  
717-772-1635 or by FAX at 717-783-6365

or you may write to:

Department of Labor & Industry  
Bureau of Workers' Compensation  
Health & Safety Division  
1171 S. Cameron Street, Room 324  
Harrisburg, PA 17104

Email: **[RA-LI-BWC-SAFETY@pa.gov](mailto:RA-LI-BWC-SAFETY@pa.gov)**



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