

WHMIS legislation was new and exciting when it became law in 1988, but time has worn it down to be a tiresome, must-do exercise that is given to the poor soul in the organization who didn't take a step backwards when they were asking volunteers to step forward. The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way if a few steps are taken to revitalize your program. Here are some proven methods to make your WHMIS program more effective and exciting again.

1

Minimize the inventory of chemicals required to immediately simplify and streamline your WHMIS program. Reviewing and properly disposing of obsolete chemicals helps minimize chemical storage dangers including spills, odours, and risk of fire. It will also liberate valuable space and do wonders for the housekeeping in your facility. Old MSDS's can then be removed from distribution, keeping it small and manageable.

2

Once the chemical inventory is optimized, review the MSDS's with the help of a master inventory list. This is a very useful document and easy to maintain if it includes information such as hazard class, supplier contact info, MSDS date, and storage location. Obtaining MSDS's can be done directly through suppliers, or through web-based MSDS services. Once obtained, MSDS's can be copied electronically or scanned to company networks to save trees and time, or just copied to binders. As long as the information is retrievable whenever workers need them, both are legally acceptable.



3

Workplace labels are normally required for chemicals that are dispensed for re-use on site. If dispensing is a routine operation, the use of pre-written workplace labels will save time and avoid incorrect label content – a major safety concern. Care needs to be taken when writing workplace labels because the content requires an understanding of the chemical properties, the quantity dispensed, and the workplace conditions. The label information can be stored on the company network, pre-printed, or printed on templates for copying onto label stock. For harsh or dirty environments, label tags can be made by laminating the labels and attaching them to the container with tie-wraps. A nice way to pull this information all together is a WHMIS label station, with containers for dispensing, pre-printed labels or label information, and an MSDS binder.

4

Contrary to popular belief, WHMIS training is not necessarily required each year. If your workforce has already been trained in the required aspects of WHMIS and the chemicals that they use or work close to, then the legislation requires an annual review of the instruction provided and the workers' familiarity with it, unless other changes in health or safety arises. When WHMIS training is conducted, gaining involvement by attendees is the key to a lively session. A skilled trainer can draw upon the experiences in the room and create WHMIS exercises to make for interesting sessions while relaying the necessary information.

There are many ways to create an effective and exciting WHMIS program using existing staff or with some help from outside resources. Call us if you are interested in finding out more ways to revitalize your WHMIS program and make it more effective and enduring.