

The “Right to Know” Law

"Right to know", in the context of United States workplace and **community environmental law**, is the legal principle that the individual has the right to know the chemicals to which they may be exposed in their daily living. It is embodied in **federal law** in the **United States** as well as in **local laws** in several states.

"Right to Know" laws take two forms: Community Right to Know and Workplace Right to Know. Each grants certain rights to those groups. The "right to know" was a movement made popular by **Rachel Carson** with her book *Silent Spring*.^[1]

Environmental illness share characteristics with common diseases. For example, **cyanide** exposure symptoms include weakness, headache, nausea, confusion, dizziness, seizures, cardiac arrest, and unconsciousness.^{[2][3]} **Influenza** and **heart disease** include the same symptoms. Cyanide is one of the most toxic substances known to man. Failure to obtain proper disclosure is likely to lead to improper or ineffective medical diagnosis and treatment. This can contribute to prolonged illness and death.

How do you know? The Material Safety Data Sheet MUST be on the premises of your workplace.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

Definition

Formal document containing important information about the characteristics and actual or potential hazards of a substance. It identifies the manufacturer of the material (with name, address, phone, and fax number) and usually includes (1) chemical identity, (2) hazardous ingredients, (3) physical and chemical properties, (4) fire and explosion data, (5) reactivity data, (6) health hazards data, (7) exposure limits data, (8) precautions for safe storage and handling, (9) need for protective gear, and (10) spill control, cleanup, and disposal procedures. Mandated by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), it is used also in many other countries in one form or the other. Called chemical safety data sheet (CSDS) in Europe.

IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT, THE MSDS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM WITH THE INJURED PARTY, AND GIVEN TO THE ER DOCTORS TO INFORM THEM WHAT THE INJURED PARTY HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO; THIS ALLOWS THEM TO ACCESS HOW IT SHOULD BEST BE TREATED.