

Jason Mechanical Corp

Tool Box Safety Talk

DETERMINATION OF HEALTH HAZARDS

The health hazards associated with a chemical used on the job site can be found on the chemical product's Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), or Safety Data Sheet (SDS). An alphabetical listing of our MSDS's, or SDS's, as well as the sheets themselves are part of our Hazard Communication Plan and are readily available on the job site.

You intuitively know that the vapor from a chemical you are using could be dangerous to your health. Fortunately, intuition is not a determining factor in the area of health hazards. Hazard determination must be scientifically justified. What you, as an individual, may consider dangerous may be nothing more than a pleasant odor to another individual. In fact, some chemicals, which are health hazards, have a very pleasant citric odor intentionally placed by the manufacturer. There must be some consistency, some reliable method for the determination of health hazards.

Physical hazards are relatively easier to determine. Chemicals have certain properties which may be measured in the laboratory to determine whether the chemical is a combustible liquid, compressed gas, explosive, flammable, organic peroxide, oxidizer, pyrophoric, and/or unstable or water-reactive.

Health hazards, on the other hand, are often much more difficult to establish. Some health hazards take years to present themselves while others are immediate and fatal. Hazard determination is generally conducted by the manufacturers and importers. Employers must rely on the professional judgment of the evaluator particularly in the area of chronic (long term) hazards.

Carcinogenicity (cancer causing) of a chemical is conclusive if it is so determined by the National Toxicology Program, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, or OSHA.

The results of laboratory tests using animals may be used to predict the possible results in humans. The results of any scientifically acceptable study which indicate a chemical health hazard shall be used for hazard determination. It is also possible that new and more complete studies may refute earlier findings and reverse a health hazard determination.

For other determinations, actual human experience should be considered. For example, if thousands of workers have been exposed to a specific chemical for 50 years without

using any personal protection with no ill effects, it would be safe to assume the chemical poses no chemical hazard.

Knowing what the health hazards of a particular chemical product are is vital to determining what personal protective equipment should be utilized when using that product on the job site.

Safety Concerns:
