

HAZARDS AT HOME

Hazardous materials aren't just found at the workplace — they can be in your home, too. Cleaners, art supplies, medicines, gasoline, motor oil — these can all cause injury if used, stored or disposed of incorrectly. Follow safe practices for handling hazardous materials at home just as you would at work, and keep all dangerous substances out of the reach of children. **Common problems:**

Broken thermometers containing mercury

Mistake: A glass thermometer shatters, spilling mercury on the floor or countertop or into the sink.

Danger: Mercury is toxic and hazardous. It easily vaporizes and can be inhaled, or it can be absorbed through the skin. While thermometers contain relatively little mercury, even a small amount poses a particular danger to children if it vaporizes and is inhaled.

What to do: Ventilate the area immediately; do not wash mercury down the drain or vacuum. Use a piece of cardboard to push the beads together. Wear neoprene gloves and use tape to pick up the beads. Use a flashlight to detect missed beads. Push any mercury left over into an envelope, seal in a plastic bag, and dispose of with a licensed hazardous waste vendor.

Antifreeze

Mistake: You've just changed your antifreeze, and you've either spilled it or left it in a bucket in the driveway while you get ready to dispose of it.

Danger: Antifreeze tastes sweet to pets and children, but it's a deadly poison.

What to do: Clean up spills immediately — even a small amount of ingested antifreeze can kill. Follow proper disposal guidelines. Store out of reach of children and pets. Better yet, use antifreeze coolant made with propylene glycol; small amounts, if ingested, are not as dangerous.

Paint supplies

Mistake: Many people aren't aware of proper storage, transportation and disposal methods.

Danger: Most are flammable or combustible, and many can be poisonous when fumes are inhaled or when the substance makes accidental skin contact.

What to do: Always read and follow all labels and directions completely.

Safety in the Air

If you plan to travel by plane or ship a package via air, remember that common, everyday supplies that seem harmless can become hazardous material when transported by air. During flight, fluctuations in temperature and pressure can cause items to leak, generate toxic fumes or start a fire.

Restrictions apply, but some exceptions are made for personal care items, medical needs, sporting equipment, and items to support physically challenged passengers. Contact your airline representative or air package carrier for specific guidelines. Here are some examples from the Federal Aviation Administration:

Personal care items: Flammable perfume and aerosols may not exceed 16 fluid ounces in their respective containers.

Matches and lighters: Strike-anywhere matches and lighters with flammable liquid reservoirs and lighter fluid are prohibited.

Dry ice: For packing perishables, the FAA allows 4 pounds or less, provided the package is vented.

Electric wheelchairs: The battery may need to be dismantled.

Prohibited items: fireworks, signal flares, sparklers; fuel, paints and lighter refills; drain cleaners and solvents; spray cans, butane fuel, scuba tanks, propane tanks, CO₂ cartridges and self-inflating rafts; firearms, gunpowder, mace, tear gas and pepper spray; gasoline-powered tools, wet-cell batteries, camping equipment with fuel; poisons and infectious substances.

It's the law: You must declare your hazardous materials to the airline or air package carrier. Failure to do so may result in fines or imprisonment.

Hazardous Materials: Be Smart, Be Safe



Hazardous Materials:

What You Should Know

Care and safety when handling, storing and working with hazardous materials is a matter of life and death. And hazardous materials aren't just a work safety issue. The dangers exist at home, too.

What can happen during exposure, unsafe handling or storage

... to health: nervous system problems, kidney and lung damage, sterility, cancer, burns and rash

... to safety: fires and explosions

What Is an MSDS?

A Material Safety Data Sheet, or MSDS, is available for all hazardous chemicals such as cleaners, art supplies, medicines and gasoline. An MSDS provides the following information:

- What the substance is and its components
- First-aid procedures and hazard warnings
- Regulations concerning the chemical
- How to store the chemical
- How to use the chemical
- How to dispose of the chemical
- How flammable, unstable or toxic the chemical is

Be safe: Read the MSDS for any substances you work with, and know how to interpret the information on an MSDS. These sheets should be made available by your employer and can also be accessed on the Internet.



Hazmat Work: Safety Guidelines

There are strict regulations for handling, transporting and removing hazardous materials that help keep you, your co-workers and the environment clean and safe. Keep these guidelines in mind for "hazmat" work:

- **EDUCATE** yourself. Hazmat work is regulated by the Department of Transportation's Office of Hazardous Materials Safety in the United States and the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System in Canada. These organizations provide information on specific materials and how they should be handled — become familiar with the regulations and rules that affect your work.
- **SUPPORT** each other. Successful hazmat work requires teamwork. Accidents and injuries are least likely when co-workers and supervisors team up to ensure that safety regulations are followed, protective equipment is used correctly, and periodic checks and training are performed.
- **SHARPEN** your skills. Seek out opportunities to learn the latest methods and innovations in the hazmat field. Refresh your knowledge of safety and emergency procedures periodically to be sure you're up to date.

What to Do in Case of an Accident

In the event of personal contamination or injury involving a hazardous material, follow these general steps:

- 1. Contain the substance.** If a work area is contaminated by a hazardous substance, regulated safety procedures must be followed. First steps may include sealing off the area, alerting other employees, evacuating the workplace and cleaning up the area.
- 2. Alert supervisors.** Even in the event of a minor accident or injury, be sure to tell a supervisor so that the incident can be reported, logged and handled safely.
- 3. Treat injuries.** How injuries are treated depends on the substance involved. In fact, in some cases it is best to avoid helping an injured person until the hazardous material has been identified. Emergency procedures may include flushing an injury with water, performing artificial respiration in the case of a lung injury or calling Poison Control. Be sure you are educated about first-aid and emergency procedures that pertain to your line of work and the materials you handle.

Note: It may take days, weeks, even years for exposure to a hazardous material to take full effect. **The bottom line:** Absence of symptoms does not mean that hazardous materials are not harming you. Wear protective equipment and follow safety regulations every time.

Watch Out for Hidden Hazards

Even if you don't work with regulated hazardous materials, many common substances, such as cleaners, paint, solvents and even printer toner, can cause skin irritation, lung injury or other problems. **Keep these safety tips in mind:**

- Don't eat or drink around chemicals.
- Keep the workplace clean, and return cleaners and other materials to storage after using them.
- Take note of unusual dusts, fumes, vapors or odors — they could signal the presence of a possibly harmful substance.
- Properly clean up any spills of potentially hazardous materials immediately.
- Store all chemical products in their original covered containers with labels and warnings clearly visible.
- Wash your hands and clothes after handling any chemical products.
- Use materials that produce dust or fumes only in a well-ventilated area.
- Keep the Poison Control Center number and other emergency numbers posted by the telephone.

