

Reading a Safety Data Sheet

About 10 minutes to deliver

Sixteen sections, and the four you actually need on site — plus what the pictograms are telling you.

Every hazardous chemical on this site has a safety data sheet, and you have a right to see it. They all follow the same 16 sections in the same order, which means once you know where to look, any SDS reads the same.

THE FOUR SECTIONS THAT MATTER AT THE POINT OF USE

- Section 2 — Hazard identification. What it does to you. Pictograms, signal word, hazard statements. Read this before anything else.
- Section 4 — First aid. What to do in the first minute. Read it *before* you need it, because you will not be reading anything afterwards.
- Section 7 — Handling and storage. What not to store it next to.
- Section 8 — Exposure controls and PPE. Which gloves, which respirator, what ventilation. "Gloves" is not an answer — nitrile, neoprene and latex behave completely differently against different chemicals.

Section 9 gives flash point. Section 10 tells you what it reacts with.

THE LABEL

Every container gets a label. If you decant something into a secondary container and it does not stay in your hand until it is empty, that container gets labelled too.

The signal word tells you the severity: Danger is the more severe, Warning the less. There is no third word.

THE PICTOGRAMS

Eight red diamonds, and three get confused:

- Flame — flammable
- Exclamation mark — irritant, less serious health effect
- Health hazard (a person with a starburst on the chest) — the serious one: carcinogen, respiratory sensitiser, reproductive toxicity
- Corrosion — burns skin, eats metal
- Skull and crossbones — acutely toxic

Exclamation mark and health hazard look similarly mild on a label and are not remotely the same thing.

IN PRACTICE

Know where the SDSs are kept and how to get one at 3am. Never use an unlabelled container. And if a chemical is new to this site, read Section 2 before you open it, not after you spill it.

ASK THE CREW

- Where are the safety data sheets kept, and can everyone get to them?
- Is there an unlabelled container anywhere on this site right now?
- What are we using today, and does anyone know what its Section 8 asks for?

29 CFR 1910.1200

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafetysolutions.com

v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafetysolutions.com/toolbox-talks/reading-a-safety-data-sheet>

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Reading a Safety Data Sheet

About 10 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1910.1200

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

Form supplied by Migna Safety Solutions · v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/reading-a-safety-data-sheet>

Keep this sheet with your training records. This form is supplied blank by Migna Safety Solutions — we did not deliver this session, were not present, and make no representation about what was said or who attended. A toolbox talk is general awareness on one topic and does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. The employer remains responsible for site-specific hazard assessment and for the training its workers are required to have. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, and confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. training.mignasafety.com