

## Right to Know Laws\* or Hazard Communication Standards

Confusion seems to abound in the area of hazardous materials and their applicable Hazard Communication Standards and Employee Right to Know laws. Let's put the record straight for public schools and the applicable Right to Know laws. The federal government has a Right to Know law, but the law does not extend coverage to state and local governments. Almost all state governments have either passed their own version of the Hazard Communication Act or put their stamp of approval on the federal government's law and extended jurisdiction to cover local and state governmental bodies—including public schools. However, federal jurisdiction does cover all private schools.

The purpose of these laws is to inform the employee about any unknown hazards associated with the employee's work. The employee has the right to know about all the hazards he or she might deal with in the workplace.

### Flinn Scientific is Your Safer Source...

Flinn will help you meet all the requirements of the Right to Know laws with easy-to-use and affordable solutions. From the teacher favorite *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* to the informative Flinn website at [www.flinnsci.com](http://www.flinnsci.com) to our helpful Technical Services department, you are never more than a phone call (800-452-1261) or e-mail ([flinn@flinnsci.com](mailto:flinn@flinnsci.com)) away from the best safety advice available. We have more than 25 years of experience helping teachers solve their safety problems, so let us help you meet your legal requirements of the Right to Know Laws.

### Major Ingredients

The federal and most state Right to Know laws contain the following six components.

#### 1. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

MSDS is the primary way of communicating the chemical hazards to an employee or an employer. This requirement requires the employer to acquire, update and maintain MSDS for all of the hazardous chemicals used or stored in the facility and make those MSDS available to the employee for informational purposes.

The minimum standards for MSDS include:

- The MSDS must be written in English
- Chemical name
- Hazardous components
- Physical characteristics (density, flashpoint, etc.)
- Physical hazards (fire, explosion, reactivity)
- Health hazards (both chronic and acute). All signs or symptoms of exposure must be listed. Carcinogens must be identified.
- Primary routes of entry and target organs
- Permissible exposure limits or TLV
- Any applicable precautions (gloves, goggles, fume hood, etc.)
- First aid and emergency procedures (chemical splash, spill handling, etc.)
- Date prepared
- Name and address of the manufacturer or MSDS preparer including the phone number.

\*The Right to Know law summary information listed here was obtained from reliable sources. For more information, go to [www.flinnsci.com/safety](http://www.flinnsci.com/safety) for the name and address of the agency in your state that regulates these laws and standards.

### Flinn MSDS Are Designed for Teachers

Flinn sends an MSDS with every chemical you order. Flinn MSDS are continually updated, guaranteeing the most up-to-date safety information possible. For more information on how to read an MSDS, please read the article on pages 926–927. Flinn sells a complete MSDS library in two versions, a hard copy version in two binders or an electronic version on a CD-ROM. For a more detailed description of our MSDS Library, please refer to pages 908–909.

For our customer's convenience, Flinn has placed a complete set of MSDS on the internet as easy to download PDF files. Simply go to [www.flinnsci.com](http://www.flinnsci.com) and click on the safety icon—individual MSDS are easy to find and also easy to print out on your printer.

### 2. Hazardous Materials List

A list of all hazardous chemicals must be assembled. In most states this list is kept only by the employer and access is given to the employee on request. Some states require a copy of this list to be given to the fire department or some other state agency. See the state-by-state breakdown of the Right to Know laws for further details.

### 3. Inventory

The hazardous materials list and an up-to-date inventory usually go hand in hand. Both the list and the inventory must be continually updated. An inventory of all hazardous chemicals is an essential ingredient to most Right to Know laws. An inventory consists of the name of the chemical, how much you have, and where it is stored.

### Use Flinn Chemventory to Prepare Your Inventory

Creating an inventory for a school science department and then maintaining it takes a lot of time. Flinn makes it easy with the Flinn Chemventory program. Chemventory is the most complete and affordable chemical management program available to schools. It is an easy-to-use database that will help you organize, create, and maintain an inventory of all your chemicals. It contains a vast amount of safety information for over 1,000 common chemicals. For a more detailed description of the Flinn Chemventory program, please refer to page 904.



### 4. Notification

All laws require the employer to notify the employee of any potential exposure or actual exposure to a hazardous substance. This is initially accomplished by posting the Right to Know regulations or poster where it is easily read and noticed by the employee. Notification is also accomplished through training and employee access to MSDS.

### 5. Training

Many state laws are very detailed and specific in the area of training requirements of employees. Most states require training to be done on an annual basis or when exposure to a new

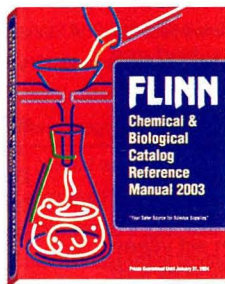
**RIGHT TO KNOW LAWS, continued**

hazard is anticipated. Some states require this training to be in written form while others allow verbal training or some combination of both types. Training includes:

- Learning to read labels and MSDS
- Providing the locations of hazardous materials
- Learning the hazards associated with the materials in the workplace, both chronic and acute
- Safe handling of chemicals
- Use of protective equipment (fire extinguishers, respirators, etc.)
- First aid and emergency procedures (spills, exposure, splashes, etc.)

**Flinn Is Your Source for Safety Training**

Annual safety training is required in most states. Flinn Scientific trains over 3,000 teachers every year through the Flinn Scientific Laboratory Safety Seminars. This safety seminar is also available as a fast-paced, two-hour video that is perfect for in-service programs or new teacher training (see page 920 for details). To help satisfy annual training requirements, Flinn provides free monthly safety training through the Flinn Science Department Meeting Safety Notes. These safety notes are sent out every month via e-mail. To receive this valuable training aid, please call Flinn or sign up on our website at [www.flinnsci.com/sncgi.html](http://www.flinnsci.com/sncgi.html).



Many teachers consider *The Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* as their “safety bible” and use it as the source of their informal safety training. The Flinn technical staff also writes numerous safety articles every year that are e-mailed to our customers or available on the Flinn website. Count on Flinn for your safety training needs.

**6. Labels and Labeling of Hazardous Materials**

Most laws require that a minimum standard of labeling must be observed. This includes:

- Chemical name, concentration, target organ, effect, and date prepared
- Hazards, both physical and health
- Name and address of the manufacturer

All states indicate that if the product is purchased and the label meets the standard, no further labeling is necessary.

**Use the Flinn Label Program to Prepare Custom Labels**

Flinn chemical labels exceed all state and federal labeling guidelines. For those solutions teachers prepare, the Flinn Scientific Chemical Labeling Software is your solution—it will create and print informative chemical labels within seconds. The software database contains over 1,000 chemical labels, but it is just as easy to create a customized label for that special solution. Please refer to page 905 for more detailed information.

**The New Laboratory Standard with the Chemical Hygiene Plan**

In May of 1990, the federal government passed an extension of the Hazard Communication Act written specifically for the research and academic laboratory. Most states also passed a version of the Laboratory Standard. Enforcement of the new Laboratory Standard began in January of 1991. The Laboratory Standard is very similar in many ways to the original law. The major difference is the requirement to have a Chemical Hygiene Plan and a Chemical Hygiene Officer.

A Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) is a written report summarizing all your safety regulations, proper laboratory procedures for handling hazardous chemicals, and training procedures. The CHP should include:

- General laboratory rules and procedures
- Personal protection equipment requirements
- Spill and accident procedures
- Chemical storage rules and procedures
- Safety equipment requirements and inspection procedures
- Employee safety training
- Exposure and medical evaluations
- Emergency evacuation plan

The CHP is a manual that describes your laboratory regulations, proper lab procedures, and how to respond to emergency situations. The listing of rules and procedures are your Standard Operating Procedures. These rules and procedures must be well thought out with the goals of always minimizing the exposure of the employee and the student to hazardous chemicals.

**Flinn CHP Has Helped Thousands of Teachers**

Developing a Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) does not have to be difficult. Thousands of schools have created their own CHP by starting with the Flinn Scientific model Chemical Hygiene Plan. This multi-paged model plan is available free from Flinn Scientific. It contains the basic safety laboratory regulations and procedures and is easy to alter to meet your individual school's needs. Available as a paper copy or as a Word document. For a free copy of this important document, send your request to Flinn Scientific, Inc., P.O. Box 219, Batavia, IL 60510. For an electronic version, please e-mail us at [flinn@flinnsci.com](mailto:flinn@flinnsci.com) and request the CHP Word document.

**Conclusion**

The various state Right to Know laws are very similar. The six major ingredients are always included with only minor changes on who and how to train or to whom you will have to send MSDS and hazardous materials lists. The paperwork requirement (MSDS and reporting lists) can be overwhelming, but is required by the laws. The science teacher's five major steps include:

- Take an inventory (developing a list of hazards)
- Acquire, update and maintain Material Safety Data Sheets
- Label all chemicals properly
- Train
- Develop a Chemical Hygiene Plan

Following these five steps will not only help you comply with your respective state's Right to Know law, but will also improve the safety in your classroom.

The enclosed state-by-state breakdown will help you decide how to comply with your state's law. Please contact Flinn if you need the name of your state agency that you can contact for more information.