

# Risk Monitor

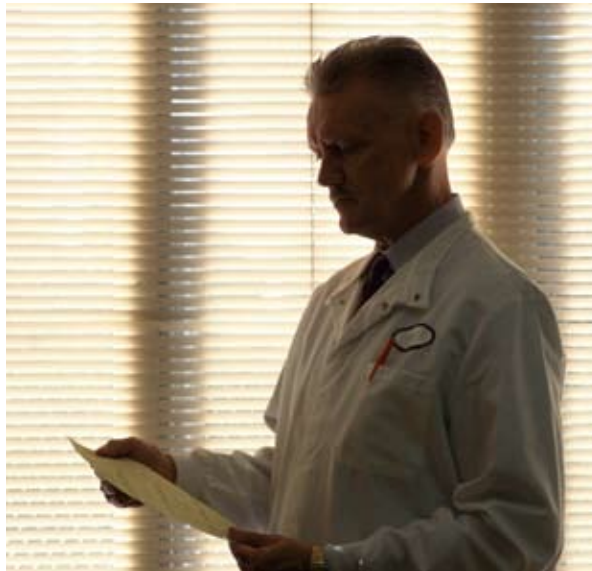


## Understanding Material Safety Data Sheets Can Save You from Injury

For many workers handling hazardous chemicals is part of their daily routine. However, no matter how routine, you should never let your guard down when it comes to handling chemicals properly. Each chemical has its own set of hazards, which means the recommended emergency procedures for each chemical are different. If you are going to handle chemicals safely, you should be aware of the manufacturer's recommended handling and storage procedures, the personal protective equipment you will need when handling, and the actions to take in the event of a chemical spill or leak.

You can find this information on the "Material Safety Data Sheet" (MSDS), which must be sent from the manufacturer/supplier along with the chemical. OSHA requires all chemical manufacturers/suppliers to provide customers with MSDS's that answer the questions listed above. However, OSHA does not require that MSDS's be written in a standard format and most are written in technical language, which can be difficult to understand.

Realizing the need for standardization, The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the Chemical Manufacturers Association developed a standard format for MSDS's. While its use is voluntary, many chemical manufacturers/suppliers have already adopted this format. The



information provided by this format is broken down into the following sections:

**Section 1** lists the manufacturer's name, address and telephone number, the product name, the generic names for the chemical, the commonly used industry name and possibly, an emergency telephone number.

**Section 2** provides information on the chemical's ingredients. OSHA requires that all hazardous components be listed on the MSDS. Non-hazardous ingredients are usually included too if helpful in determining how to use and store the chemical.

**Section 3** identifies the hazards of the material. This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section provides an overview and the second sub-section discusses the potential health effects of the chemical.

**Section 4** describes basic first aid procedures to be used by a worker with no specific training in first aid. Instructions are provided for each

type of potential exposure.

**Sections 5 and 6** provide information, precautions and instructions to fight fires caused by the material, including hazards the material presents when burned and what methods can

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Wellness Program may be the long-term answer for slowing the continually rising costs of employer-sponsored health care. If you think adding a Wellness Program to your operations might be cost effective, please feel free to contact a Benefits Customer Service Agent at 317-844-7759 for further discussion.

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# Are iPods a Safety Hazard at Work?

“Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast.” At least so thought William Congreve, a 17th century English playwright. However, the music Congreve was referring to didn’t come out of technological concoctions such as the iPod. Had he been alive today, he might be less concerned with the effects of the music and a lot more concerned with the effects of using this technology, especially on the job.

The iPod is fast becoming the method of choice for employees who need their daily dosage of tunes during the workday. While it can be argued that usage of personal music players in the office help employees concentrate by letting them tune out extraneous noise, it should be noted that any productivity gain comes with a price.

The first safety hazard associated with repeated iPod use is a condition that results from the hand movements necessary to navigate through a playlist. The British Chiropractic Association has called the movement “unnatural,” stating it separates the joint in the thumb every time the action is performed. The ultimate result of repeating this movement too often is a Repetitive Stress Injury (RSI). In addition to RSI, the prolonged gripping of the device, the repetitive pushing of the small buttons and the awkward wrist movements can lead to carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis. As the devices become even smaller with each succeeding product generation, the risk for these conditions will become more prevalent. And as every employer knows, an employee with carpal tunnel syndrome or tendonitis is not only unproductive, but prone to racking up large medical claims.

The potential for hearing-related problems connected with iPod use is another source of alarm. Digital technology permits users to listen to thousands of consecutive hours of music. Older technologies either required users to turn over a cassette or contained only an hour or so of stored music. Either way, the ears had a brief respite from the sound. Also, the higher-quality sound of new music players makes it easier for users to turn up the volume to dangerous levels. High-volume levels can result in tinnitus, a condition in which the sufferer hears continuous buzzing in the ears.

Many tinnitus sufferers complain of buzzing, whooshing, chirping, hissing, ocean waves and even music in their ears. Some people only experience tinnitus occasionally, while others experience it 24 hours a day. The problem is associated with the sensorineural system, which transmits signals from the inner ear to the brain. An employee suffering from tinnitus is not going to exhibit increased levels of concentration.

As if this weren’t enough, employees walking around with earphones not only block out extraneous noise, but everything else, including warnings of imminent danger such as a fire alarm. This puts them at increased risk for personal injury.

For these reasons employers who permit the use of iPods or other personal music players in the workplace should establish guidelines concerning the length of time an employee can listen and in what areas iPod use is permitted.

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individuals to provide a variety of ideas, but not so many that its work becomes bogged down. Teams should include long-term employees and recent hires to strike a balance between experienced eyes and fresh perspectives. The team then chooses a leader and a co-leader. The next step is deciding which specific area will be the focus of their work. Remember, a Kaizen strives for continuity but it does so in gradual increments. One area is targeted, followed by another and then another until all areas of the operation have been re-evaluated and given a new course of action.

After determining which area to target, the team then studies all safety records for the area, such as OSHA injury logs or accident investigation reports. Armed with the data, the team visits the “gemba,” or the actual workspace, so they can obtain a first hand view of conditions there. The team should employ a number of evaluation methods, such as interviewing

both staff and management in the area, taking walking tours, and observing as workers during different shifts perform tasks.

The team then takes its findings to upper management so they can set improvement goals for the area. These goals will act as a baseline against which progress will be measured. The goals must be specific and quantifiable (e.g. reduce on-site injuries from eight per month to four per month). Once a baseline has been established, the leader assigns each team member specific tasks to help achieve goals and designates the time frame within which tasks must be completed. A document is drawn up that outlines the problem, improvement goals, team members’ tasks and due dates. This document also serves as a visible testament that everyone is in agreement to what needs to be done. That agreement of thought and action is the key to a lasting change.

# Consider Safety Accommodations for the Older Worker



With age comes wisdom and experience. However, getting older also brings the inevitable decline in physical and sometimes mental agility. This change can present serious challenges for the older worker. The Department of Labor's workplace statistics for 2004 indicate workers 64 and older had the lowest number of workplace injuries, however, the fatality rate for workers 55 and older rose by 10 percent.

How is it possible for older workers to have fewer job-related injuries than other age groups, but still experience increased fatalities? The answer to that question lies in the body's reaction to the aging process. While older workers may have fewer accidents, when they get injured their injuries are often more severe. A longer healing process allows more time for complications that can lead to death.

However, it isn't only the possibility of older worker fatalities that must concern employers. The type of injuries the maturing employee suffers is also significant. Older workers tend to report more back injuries than their younger counterparts. In addition, a number of workplace injuries are the result of performing the same tasks over and over. Repetitive motion injuries develop over time. Because of this, older workers report more musculoskeletal injuries since they've had more time for these types of injuries to develop.

As the work force continues to age, it is important for employers to recognize these facts and make accommodations that will allow older employees to remain safe and healthy. The American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) recommends the following environmental changes to keep maturing workers safe:

- Improve illumination and add color contrast.

- Eliminate heavy lifts, elevated work from ladders and long reaches.
- Design work floors and platforms with smooth and solid decking while still allowing some cushioning.
- Reduce static standing time.
- Remove clutter from control panels and computer screens and use large video displays.
- Reduce noise levels.
- Install chain actuators for valve hand wheels, damper levers or other similar control devices, which bring the control manipulation to ground level and help reduce falls.
- Install skid-resistant material for flooring and especially for staircase treads.
- Install shallow-angle stairways in place of ladders when space permits and where any daily, elevated access is needed to complete a task.
- Utilize hands-free, volume-adjustable telephone equipment.
- Increase task rotation, which will reduce the strain of repetitive motion.
- Lower sound system pitches, such as on alarm systems, as they tend to be easier to hear.
- Lengthen time requirements between steps in a task.
- Increase the time allowed for making decisions.
- Consider necessary reaction time when assigning older workers to tasks.
- Provide opportunities for practice and time to develop task familiarity.

Bear in mind that even though these changes are ostensibly being made for the older worker, they will actually have a beneficial effect on the health and safety of the entire work force population.

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be used to extinguish flames.

**Section 7** addresses risk prevention when working with the material, including proper storage procedures.

**Section 8** discusses controls and protective equipment.

**Section 9** describes the physical and chemical properties of the material.

**Section 10** contains information on stability and reactivity of the chemical including whether the chemical has the potential to react with another substance due to oxidation, heat, decomposition or polymerization.

**Sections 11 through 13** outline toxicological and ecological information, including how to dispose of the chemical.

**Sections 14 through 16** explain methods to transport the chemical.

Material Safety Data Sheets are important tools when working with hazardous chemicals. Of course, a tool is only effective if you understand how to use it. Be sure you know where the MSDS's are kept for the chemicals you use and familiarize yourself with them. And most importantly, know where you can find the emergency information on all of the MSDS's for chemicals in your work area.

# Kaizen and The Art of Targeting Safety Improvements

If the past is any indication of the future, it is not hard to imagine more intermixing of cultures as people all over the world become more comfortable with their status as citizens of a global community. Having the opportunity to see how other philosophies regard fields, such as medicine or technology, has been the catalyst encouraging Americans to examine their own ideas and practices. This examination process has resulted in a number of breakthroughs in these areas.

As far as best practices in business are concerned, Americans have been looking to Japan for inspiration for some time now. American business has imported quite a few Japanese management systems. One of those systems, Kaizen, is a method used to make gradual and continuous improvements to any aspect of a business' operations.

The Kaizen philosophy is deeply rooted in the Japanese cultural philosophy of orderliness in all things. The five "s" framework of the system includes:

- Seiri – tidiness
- Seiton – orderliness
- Seiso – cleanliness
- Seiketsu – a methodical plan for cleaning up

- Shitsuke – discipline in continuing to follow the course that has been established

Followers of the Kaizen philosophy believe that "muda," or waste and inefficiency, is the enemy of order. To eliminate muda businesses must rely on the discipline of individual workers, teamwork, improved morale, quality circles, and suggestions for improvement. The idea is that if the individual is disciplined enough to continually find ways for improvement, that discipline will carry over into the team and the team will consistently generate ideas through outlets such as quality circles. Morale is improved as the team recognizes its significance in the quest for quality. The improved morale results in the team working harder to maintain an environment that invites improvement. These five elements are a continuous circle, each one giving and receiving the motivation to continue improvement.

Until now, Kaizen has been used mainly as a quality assurance tool. The philosophy easily lends itself to making improvements in product manufacturing. Kaizen is starting to be used as a methodology for making safety improvements as well.

As in all Kaizens, the team is the basic unit that will start the improvement process. A team should consist of enough

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