

## **How to get information on the hazards of arts and crafts materials: Material Safety Data Sheets 101**

### ***What is a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)?***

MSDSs are technical specification sheets that provide information on a product's hazards, as well as the precautions required for safe use of the product in the working environment. MSDSs contain information provided by the manufacturer and the quality of the information provided may vary.

### ***What information can I find on a Material Safety Data Sheet?***

In general, MSDSs should:

- include the name of the product and the name and address of the supplier or manufacturer
- list all the chemicals in a product (except the trade secrets of products)
- identify any toxic ingredients more than 1% of the total mixture (or more than 0.1% if carcinogenic)
- list the product's physical properties
- list the product's fire and explosion data
- list its acute and chronic health hazards
- describe its reactivity (conditions that could cause the product to react or decompose dangerously)
- explain how to clean up large spills and dispose of the material
- identify types of first aid and protective equipment needed to use it safely
- discuss any special hazards of the product
- include the date prepared and the name and phone number of the person or department who prepared it.

### ***Where can I find Material Safety Data Sheets?***

MSDSs can be obtained by writing to manufacturers, distributors, or importers of the product. They can often be found on their websites, and there are also a number of websites devoted to lists of MSDSs (see below).

In Canada, MSDSs are required for certain products as specified by the *Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System* (WHMIS). For federal workplaces, WHMIS is enforced by the Labour Branch of Human Resources Development Canada. In most other workplaces, provincial or territorial agencies are responsible for occupational health and safety and for enforcing WHMIS. For more information, and to find the contact information for the agency in your

province or territory, please visit Canada's National Occupational Health and Safety (CanOSH) web site at: <http://www.canoshweb.org/en/map.html> (developed by Canada's Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)). More information on WHMIS is also available at: [http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/intro\\_whmis.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/intro_whmis.html)

Be sure to get the most recent MSDSs, which by law should be less than three years old. For products that do not have MSDSs or whose MSDSs are incomplete or unavailable, remove the product from your studio and replace with a product for which better information is available.

### **Resources**

Material Safety Data Sheet User's Guide, Prepared by Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du Québec.

<http://www.reptox.csst.qc.ca/Documents/SIMDUT/GuideAng/pdf/DC200-338-4A%20materiel%20saf.pdf>

Primer on how to read an MSDS

[www.lehigh.edu/~kaf3/guides/msds.html](http://www.lehigh.edu/~kaf3/guides/msds.html)

### **MSDSs Online**

MSDS Databases

[www.msdsearch.com/DBLinksN.htm#Foreign%20Language](http://www.msdsearch.com/DBLinksN.htm#Foreign%20Language)

Interactive Learning Paradigms, Incorporated: Where to find Material Safety Data Sheets Online:

<http://www.ilpi.com/msds>

MSDSs for materials used at Rhode Island School of Art & Design

<http://intranet.risd.edu/departments/envirohealth/msds.asp>

*Winsor & Newton*. Paint MSDSs available under Health & Safety section:

[www.winsornewton.com/index2.php](http://www.winsornewton.com/index2.php)



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