

# WHMIS

## What is WHMIS?

**WHMIS** stands for **Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System**. WHMIS is a Canada-wide system designed to give employers and workers information about hazardous materials used in the workplace. It is a system designed to provide workplace standards for the control, handling, storage, and disposal of “controlled products.” Controlled products are hazardous materials that can impact the health & safety of the workplace and its employees.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* Regulation 36/93 requires that all workers who work with, or are likely to handle, or be exposed to hazardous materials in their workplace, receive training and education about WHMIS. It also requires employers to obtain health and safety information about hazardous materials in their workplaces and to pass it on to their workers. There are three ways in which the information is to be provided:

- **Labels** on the containers of hazardous materials – there are two types. *Supplier Label* – Supplier labels are required by legislation and should be affixed to the product container before shipping to a company. *Workplace Label* – used when the product is being transferred from its original supplier container into a different one and also when supplier label is illegible or has been removed accidentally.
- **Material safety data sheets (MSDS)** which supplement labels with detailed hazard and precautionary information. Any controlled product that falls under one of the WHMIS classification requires a MSDS. They contain the correct handling information for the product and are broken down into 9 categories; and lastly,
- **Worker education programs.**

## What other laws affect WHMIS

1. **Controlled Products Regulation** – defines what a controlled product is and what information goes onto the supplier label and the MSDS.
2. **Ingredient Disclosure List** – hazardous ingredients must be disclosed on an MSDS.
3. **Hazardous Materials Information Review Act.**
4. **Creation of Information Review Commission** – provides rules and exemptions regarding confidential information and what information suppliers/employers can withhold from labels/MSDS.
5. **Hazardous Material Information Review Regulation** – criteria for determining claims for exemption, fees for filling and any appeals.

## Does Your Workplace require a WHMIS program?

A WHMIS program is required in all workplaces that may have controlled products. Employers must provide workers with information regarding safety and health hazards in their workplaces. Employees have a right to know of any potential dangers that can affect their work and health.

In WHMIS training, employees and supervisors should learn about the purpose and overall design of WHMIS, and the six hazard categories it incorporates. They should learn the relevance of Material Safety Data Sheets and product labels from their own workplaces. This program should also cover safe handling procedures, storage and disposal of hazardous materials, as well as emergency measures. Upon completion of this program, employees and supervisors should know how to locate and interpret any hazard information they encounter. Where the number of participants warrant, this program should be available in the language most employees are comfortable with.

These various health and safety training requirements assist in meeting the duty of care and due diligence with which all participants in a workplace are charged.

## What are the Classes of WHMIS?



### **Class A – Compressed Gas**

Contents inside the container are under pressure. The risk factor is explosion if the container is damaged or it may act as a rocket if dropped.



### **Class B – Flammable and Combustible Material**

Products can ignite, explode or react with other chemicals. There are 6 divisions under Class B:

Division 1: Flammable

Division 2: Flammable Liquid

Division 3: Combustible Liquid

Division 4: Flammable Solid

Division 5: Flammable Aerosol

Division 6: Reactive Flammable Material



### **Class C – Oxidizing Material**

Risk factor – if this product comes into contact with oxygen/organic material, it will explode or ignite.

### **Class D – Poisonous and Infectious Materials**



Division 1: Materials causing immediate and toxic effects – can be poisoned or killed if this product enters the body.



Division 2: Materials causing other toxic effects – may experience chronic health effects from exposure.



Division 3: Bio-hazardous Infectious Material – may become infected with a disease if contact is made with this product.



**Class E – Corrosive Material** – skin can burn or can experience severe eye and skin irritations.



**Class F – Dangerously Reactive Material** – highly unstable material that can react to other products, heat, light, or sudden movements.

Resources: [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/whmis/](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/whmis/)  
[www.iapa.ca](http://www.iapa.ca)