

MSDS - Why Do I Need Them?

Have you considered the risks of not providing a safe working environment for your staff and contractors? Are you aware you **must** provide the latest Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all cleaning chemicals and/or hazardous substances in your premises as part of your legal obligation in providing a safe working environment? Do you understand the relevance of a MSDS?

An MSDS is designed to convey important information for you, your staff and emergency personnel on the correct procedures for handling or working with a particular substance. It contains information relating to physical data (boiling point, melting point), toxicity, health effects, first aid, storage, disposal, personal protective equipment and spill or leak procedures.

The image shows a sample Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) form. It is divided into several sections: Section 1: Product Identification and Use, Section 2: Hazardous Ingredients, Section 3: Physical Data, Section 4: Fire and Explosion Data, and Section 5: Reactivity Data. The form contains various fields for product name, manufacturer, supplier, physical properties, and hazard information.

As a business owner or manager you are required by occupational health and safety law to ensure your equipment and substances are in a safe condition and they are used safely. Do you have sound systems in place? When was the last time you performed a check on your food business to see if you comply? How confident are you that your systems or procedures comply with the law and you are effectively managing your business risk?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have the latest Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) from your chemical suppliers of all chemicals and/or hazardous substances?
- Have you provided this information to your staff?
- Do you have a register of chemicals and/or hazardous substances stored and used on your premises?
- Have you checked to verify if all chemical storage containers are suitable for the substance they contain and are correctly stored and labelled?
- Have you provided the latest information and training for your staff and contractors who could be exposed to cleaning chemicals and/or hazardous substances?
- Have you explained to your staff their obligations under occupational health and safety law?

Demonstrating due diligence is a means of managing your business risks. Failure to observe due diligence may come at a significant cost in the longer term.

