



SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

Hazardous Liquids

Hazardous liquids can be found in many worksites. A survey of every worksite should be conducted as part of the Hazardous Communication/Right-to-Know program to assess a company's chemical inventory.

Dangers

What makes hazardous liquids dangerous? Let's look at some of the hazards present in many workplaces:

- **Flamables/explosives:** Liquids such as gasoline, alcohol, and varnish might create a fire hazard. Some liquids become an explosion hazard. Watch out for rags soaked in oils or flammables.
- **Combustibles:** Liquids such as lubricating fluid, diesel fuel, heating oil and cleaners may be combustible.
- **Corrosives:** Liquids that are acidic or caustic may burn the skin or cause respiratory problems.
- **Reactives:** Liquids that can burn, explode, or release dangerous gases after contact with water, air, or other chemicals. An example would be mixing bleach and ammonia.
- **Toxins:** Liquids that cause illness or death from exposure. These could include mutagens, carcinogens, or poisons such as pesticides and insecticides.
- **Radioactive:** Liquids that may emit radiation.

Routes of Entry

An employee gets exposed to a hazardous liquid through the three main routes of entry:

- **Absorption:** Employees can absorb hazardous liquids through the skin. Effective protection may include gloves, aprons, sleeves, or protective suits.
- **Inhalation:** Employees can inhale fumes or vapors from hazardous liquids. Effective protection might include ventilation, exhaust, and respirators.
- **Ingestion:** While accidental ingestion of hazardous chemicals may be rare, employees can ingest chemical residue by touching their mouth or food before washing or by eating or drinking in areas with hazardous liquids.



How to Protect Employees

- Maintain a current list of chemicals.
- Maintain current Safety Data Sheets (SDS).
- Read and follow recommendations on SDSs.
- Store hazardous liquids in appropriate containers and in appropriate areas.
- Follow recommendations for protection from hazards.
- Make sure engineering controls, such as ventilation, are clean and working properly.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) issued to employees should meet OSHA guidelines for protection.
- PPE users should receive training on use, maintenance, storage, end-of-life indicators, and how to obtain replacements.

For more information, visit OSHA's Hazard Communication website:
<https://www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/>



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