

Hazard Communication

WHAT IS A HAZARD COMMUNICATOR?

The hazard communicator is the company resource who reviews complicated product-related data and consolidates the information into product hazard warnings and labeling. They also assign other classifications that are used by the company and customers to safely handle and transport products in compliance with local and international commerce requirements. This evaluation and assignment of hazard warnings is a primary component of good product stewardship, and is necessary for customers and coworkers to work safely with chemicals. The hazard communicator provides the most up-to-date product information on safe product handling by authoring and communicating this information through the use of safety data sheets (SDS) and product labels. This is accomplished by reviewing chemical, physical, and toxicological hazard information, applying regional regulatory and transportation requirements, and following company policies on confidentiality, resulting in informative documentation that provides guidance on the safe handling of the product and protecting the environment throughout the product life cycle.

The hazard communicator interacts with both external and internal customers. External customers frequently have product handling questions or they will request advice on product disposal. Internally, the hazard communicator interacts with the chemists and engineers who develop and support new and existing products. They frequently work with toxicologists, review informational databases, utilize hazard information on similar products to provide preliminary warnings on new products that have not yet been tested, and update affected SDS as new information becomes available. The hazard communicator is an internal resource to assist product and business development teams in developing less hazardous and/or greener products, by providing a preview of warnings for new product formulations and proposed formulation changes.



WHAT KIND OF BACKGROUND DO I NEED?

Preferably, hazard communicators need a scientific background, but many people end up in hazard communication from a variety of backgrounds. However, a good understanding of scientific principles is key to being a good hazard communicator. Many hazard communicators have a background in Industrial Hygiene or Public Health, and an advanced degree can broaden your career opportunities.

If you are serious about entering hazard communication, you should consider a degree in Chemistry, Biology, or another physical science, or a master's degree in Industrial Hygiene, Environmental Science, or Public Health.

WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE?

Hazard communicators work with a variety of companies. Many work with manufacturers who make various chemical-based products, including pharmaceuticals, house-cleaning products, consumer goods, automotive products, large-quantity chemicals for use in other industries, and paper products. Any company that manufactures goods that will be used in a workplace needs a hazard communicator to author their SDS.

Other hazard communicators work as consultants. This allows flexibility and freedom in a work schedule and a constant flow of new types of work.

Hazard communicators work on a global level and can be in constant communication with suppliers all over the globe. Since many companies are multi-national, there are excellent opportunities for those who are interested in other cultures.

For more information on hazard communication, please visit www.schc.org.





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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Workshops for Authoring SDS's and Labels
- ◆ Dangerous Goods Transportation Classification
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- ◆ Advanced Topics in Toxicology and Environmental Health and Safety



SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Society for Chemical Hazard Communication holds conferences each year in the Fall and Spring. Meetings feature regulatory hazard communication updates, expert speakers from domestic and international chemical agencies, and valuable opportunities for business networking.