Ask the Expert

Hazard Communication in the Facility

Safety | Protecting What Matters Most

Read our interview with Michael Dupree, Fisher Scientific senior safety specialist, to find out about his experiences and learn best practices for hazard communication to help maintain compliance and keep your people and facility safe.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and your role as a Fisher Scientific safety specialist.

I am a born and raised Texan and reside on the Gulf Coast. I've been a Fisher Scientific safety specialist for almost six years, but have over 25 years of safety experience — specifically in facility and personnel safety, and flame resistant and arc flash safety products. I am a certified Quality Safety Sales Professional (QSSP), a member of the National Safety Council (NSC), and certified in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 30 and thermal protection. I have a passion for safety and helping my customers with compliance and improving the safety of their facility and workplace environment.

What are some of the most common challenges you see throughout facilities when it comes to hazard communication?

Non-compliance is one of the biggest issues I see related to hazard communication, specifically with signage. Although some signage may be present, it oftentimes does not include the right message or color according to the standard.

Labeling for chemical storage is another area where I frequently see need for corrective actions. Secondary container labeling often gets overlooked, mainly for 55 gallon drums. I once inspected a petrochemical company who used handwritten labels and tags on their containers that could easily smear or fall off, leaving employees vulnerable to the contents within.

They also did not have a labeling system in place or a process documented to maintain and update labels as needed. I was able to help them put together a labeling system and recommend a printing system to help ensure labels are legible and could adhere to containers properly. One concern they had was not being able to reuse containers that had labels. I recommended a dissolvable label, which would enable them to reuse the containers after washing.

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What are the standards that safety and health leaders should be familiar with for hazard communication?

OSHA 1910.1200, Hazard Communication and OSHA 1910.145, for accident prevention signs and tags are both equally important when it comes to communicating hazards and promoting compliance and safety. I feel that it is also critical for safety leaders to understand Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS) requirements. It's also important to remember to label all secondary containers. Equally essential are the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z535 standards. There are several parts to these, including guidance on safety colors and symbols used in signage and labeling. ANSI Z535.1-2022, Safety Colors and ANSI Z535.5-2022, Safety Tags and Barricade Tapes (for temporary hazards) were just revised this year.

What suggestions do you have for companies to improve their hazard communication programs and maintain compliance?

Hazard assessments are definitely key, as well as employee training on the hazards and hazard communication program so they know what to be looking for and have a good understanding of labels, safety data sheets, and signage. The appropriate use of pictographs, signal words, and major messages are crucial to compliant signage.

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What is one piece of advice you would give safety leaders to help improve hazard communication throughout their facility?

Conduct annual assessments of all the chemical storage areas and any areas throughout the facility using secondary containers. Conduct monthly assessments of signage to make sure it is in accordance with current regulations and updated if new equipment or chemicals are introduced.

Refer to our **Hazard Communication Guide** to learn more about key elements of a compliant and effective hazard communication program.

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