

Understanding Safety Data Sheet Language¹

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Awareness of the importance of safety has increased in the pesticide and pest control industry over the past several decades. This awareness has grown in response to activities by the government and the public as well as the news media, including coverage of major chemical accidents. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in 1989 expanded its Hazard Communication Standard to cover all employees who could potentially be exposed to hazardous chemicals in their work areas—regardless of the place of employment or the nature of the work. The Hazard Communication Standard requires that chemical manufacturers and importers thoroughly evaluate chemicals. Any chemical that is determined to be hazardous must have a safety data sheet (SDS) developed to communicate the hazard potential to users. Prior to the 2012 revised OSHA Hazard Communication Standard, these were referred to as material safety data sheets (MSDS). Their purpose is to provide handlers of chemicals, including pesticides, with the proper procedures for handling and working with the chemical. People who are primary users of an SDS would include employees who handle a certain material in their daily occupations, those who store chemicals at their place of business, and emergency response crews who need to understand procedures associated should an emergency happen to occur. The SDS is not designed for someone who may apply a lawn and garden pesticide once or twice a year. They are written in an occupational fashion for those who handle a material routinely.

A large amount of pesticide hazard information is generated in the course of fulfilling regulatory requirements for product registration. The Environmental Protection Agency requires more than 120 various tests, yielding primarily toxicological, environmental and physical property data, much of which can be used in the SDS.

Chemical manufacturers are required by the Hazard Communication Standard to provide an SDS to the purchaser of the product at the time of the first order and anytime the SDS is significantly revised thereafter. In other words, a chain of supply begins with the manufacturer and funnels down to dealers, and eventually end buyers of their products. The SDS may be included with the pallet on which the product is shipped, or it may be submitted electronically or delivered by mail. As the pesticides are further distributed to satellite suppliers, dealers, or users, a copy of the SDS must accompany their original orders.

There are several sources of SDS. In a workplace, there should be a copy on file of the SDS for each product that the business uses. Many land grant university Extension pesticide safety and education programs will have a website containing links to such documents, chemical distributors will have them, and internet or software subscriptions may be purchased.

The 2012 revised Hazard Communication Standard requires manufacturers to present their SDS's in a standard

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16-section format. The sequence and titles of the sections as specified in the standard create consistency from manufacturer to manufacturer. For data sheets prepared in accordance with the standard, the 16 section titles and their order of appearance is the same from manufacturer to manufacturer, but the amount of information *within a given section* is left to the discretion of each individual manufacturer.

Sections 1–8 contain general information about the chemical, identification, hazards, composition, safe handling practices, and emergency control measures. Sections 9–11 and 16 contain other technical and scientific information, such as physical and chemical properties, stability and reactivity information, toxicological information, exposure control information, and other information including the date of preparation or last revision. The SDS must also state that no applicable information was found when the preparer does not find relevant information for any required element.

The SDS must also contain Sections 12–15, to be consistent with the UN Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, but OSHA will not enforce the content of these sections because they concern matters handled by other agencies.


This publication presents the 16 sections of the SDS with a brief interpretation of the section contents.

Note: The examples that follow were taken from numerous SDS from various manufacturers; it is important to note that these examples do not represent an actual SDS for any one product.

Section 1. Identification.

| MSDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|--|---|
| Product name Acme Insecticide Concentrate | Product's brand name. |
| Manufacturer Acme Agrosociences PO Box 12345 9330 Chemical Way Indianapolis, IN | Company's identification and where to obtain information. |
| Telephone number for information (800) 123-4567 | Non-emergency information regarding the product. |
| CHEMTREC (800) 424-9300 | CHEMical TRansportation Emergency Center phone number for transportation emergencies. |
| EPA registration number 264-945 | EPA assigns each registered product its own identity number. |
| Date prepared March 1, 2005 | Date on which the SDS was prepared. |
| Code number 000897 | Identification number assigned by the manufacturer. |
| Chemical family Pyrethroid pesticide | A classification of pesticides. |
| SDS number S000-10000 | Specific product identification assigned by the manufacturer. |

Section 2. Hazards identification.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| <p>Hazard classification This material is hazardous under the criteria of the Federal OSHA Hazard Communication Standard 29CFR 1910.1200. Flammable liquids—Category 3 Eye irritation—Category 2A Specific target organ toxicity—repeated exposure—Category 2</p> | This information is intended for emergency response personnel. |
| <p>Label elements Hazard pictograms</p>  <p>Signal word: WARNING! Hazards Flammable liquid and vapour. Causes serious eye irritation. May cause damage to organs (kidney) through prolonged or repeated exposure.</p> | Acute and chronic effects. |
| <p>Precautionary statements Prevention Keep away from heat/sparks/open flames/hot surfaces. No smoking. Keep container tightly closed. Ground/bond container and receiving equipment. Use only non-sparking tools. Take precautionary measures against static discharge. Do not breathe dusts/fume/gas/mist/vapours/spray. Wash skin thoroughly after handling. Wear protective gloves/eye protection/face protection. Response IF ON SKIN (or hair): Take off immediately all contaminated clothing. Rinse skin with water/shower. IF IN EYES: Rinse cautiously with water for several minutes. Remove contact lenses, if present and easy to do. Continue rinsing. Get medical advice/attention if you feel unwell. If eye irritation persists: Get medical advice/attention. In case of fire: Use dry sand, dry chemical, or alcohol-resistant foam to extinguish. Storage Store in a well-ventilated place. Keep cool. Disposal Dispose of contents/container to an approved waste disposal plant.</p> | Handler and emergency response information. |
| <p>Other hazards No data available</p> | Miscellaneous potential hazards |

Section 3. Composition/information on ingredients.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|---|
| <p>Chemical ingredients Active ingredient propachlor, 2,3-diethyl—20% Inert ingredient attapulgite—80%</p> | The active ingredient is responsible for controlling or repelling the pest. Inert ingredients can help make the product safer, more effective, and easier to handle. Both the active and inert ingredients must be listed if they are known to contribute to the product's hazard potential unless they are a trade secret. Some manufacturers may also include the active ingredient's molecular formula and weight in this section. |
| <p>CAS Reg. No propachlor 1919-16-7 attapulgite 8031-13-3</p> | Active and inert ingredients are also identified by their Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) number. This service is a chemical substance listing clearinghouse that includes millions of chemical names. |

Section 4. First aid measures.

| MSDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Eyes Hold eyelids open and flush with a steady, gentle stream of water for at least 15 minutes. Seek immediate medical attention, preferably with an ophthalmologist. | What to do if the product gets into the eyes. |
| Skin exposure In case of contact, wash with plenty of soap and water. Seek medical attention if irritation develops or persists. | What to do if the product gets on the skin. |
| Inhalation Remove the victim from immediate source of exposure and assure that the victim is breathing. If breathing is difficult, administer oxygen, if available. If victim is not breathing, administer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Seek medical attention. | What to do if the product is breathed into the lungs. |
| Ingestion If victim is conscious and alert, give 2–3 glasses of water to drink. Do not induce vomiting. Seek immediate medical attention. | What to do if the product is swallowed. |
| Notes to physician All treatments should be based on observed signs and symptoms of distress in the patient. Consideration should be given to the possibility that overexposure to materials other than this product may have occurred. Treat symptomatically. No specific antidote available. This material is an acid. The primary toxicity of this product is due to its irritant effects on mucous membranes. | Specific instructions to the physician, including what to administer, if anything. Users should be familiar with where this is found on the SDS so that in an emergency, the information can be given to the physician quickly. Any treatment listed in this section should not be attempted by a non-medical person. |

Section 5. Fire fighting measures.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Flash point 63°C or 145°F | The minimum temperature at which a liquid gives off vapor in sufficient concentration to ignite near the surface of the liquid or in the test vessel used. |
| Lower explosive limit 2.6% Upper explosive limit 12.6% | The upper and lower explosive limits are concentrations in air that will produce a flash of fire when an ignition source is present. |
| Extinguishing media Recommended: foam, water, carbon dioxide, dry chemical. | Specific instructions to firefighters on how to extinguish a fire involving the chemical. |
| Personal protective equipment Wear self-contained breathing apparatus (pressure-demand MSHA/NIOSH approved or equivalent) and full protective gear. | Description of safety equipment that firefighters should use in case of fire involving the chemical. |
| Special procedures Contain runoff. Remain upwind. Avoid breathing smoke. Use water spray to cool containers exposed to fire. | Safety instructions to emergency personnel responding to the fire. |
| Unusual fire and explosion hazards Product will burn under fire conditions. | Additional safety information for emergency personnel. |
| Hazardous decomposition materials (under fire conditions) hydrogen chloride, oxides of carbon. | By-products formed due to fire that may pose a risk to emergency personnel and the environment. |

Section 6. Accidental release measures.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| <p>Evacuation procedures and safety Wear appropriate protective gear for the situation. See personal protection information in Section 8.</p> | Actions to take when dealing with a spill. |
| <p>Containment of spill Stop leak if it can be done without risk. Dike spill using absorbent or impervious materials such as earth, sand, or clay.</p> | |
| <p>Cleanup and disposal of spill Absorb with vermiculite or other inert absorbent. Shovel up into an appropriate closed container (see Section 7: Handling and Storage). Decontaminate tools and equipment following cleanup.</p> | |
| <p>Environmental and regulatory reporting If spilled on the ground, the affected area should be removed to a depth of 1–2 inches and placed in an appropriate container for disposal. Prevent material from entering public sewer system or any waterways. Spills may be reported to the National Response Center (800-424-8802) and to state and/or local agencies.</p> | |

Section 7. Handling and storage.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|--|--|
| <p>Minimum/maximum storage temperatures 0–50°C (32–122°F)</p> | Temperature range for storing the product in order to prevent chemical separation, inactivation, crystallization, coagulation, or other breakdown. |
| <p>Handling Do not breathe vapors and mists. Do not get on skin or in eyes. Do not ingest. Use handling, storage, and disposal procedures that will prevent contamination of water, food, or feed. Avoid freezing. If freezing occurs, thaw and remix before using.</p> | Procedures to minimize the risks of accidental exposure or release of the product. |
| <p>Storage Store in an area that is away from ignition sources.</p> | Procedures that minimize potential storage hazards. |

Section 8. Exposure controls/personal protection.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| <p>Ingestion Prevent eating, drinking, tobacco usage, and cosmetic application in areas where there is a potential for exposure to the material. Always wash thoroughly after handling.</p> | Protective measures to reduce the likelihood of swallowing. |
| <p>Eye contact To avoid eye contact, wear safety glasses with side shields or chemical goggles.</p> | Protective measures to reduce the likelihood of the pesticide getting in the eyes. |
| <p>Skin contact To avoid skin contact, wear rubber gloves, rubber boots, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and a head covering.</p> | Protective measures to reduce the possibility of getting the pesticide on the skin. |
| <p>Respiratory protection To avoid breathing dust, use a particulate filter, NIOSH-approved per 42 CFR Part 84. Select N or R or P type as appropriate for the oil characteristics of any other air contaminants present. Filter efficiency may range from 95% to 99.7% as appropriate for the size distribution of dusts present.</p> | The type of respirator, if any, needed when handling this product. |
| <p>Engineering controls If needed, use local exhaust to keep exposures to a minimum.</p> | Procedures used to maintain airborne levels below TLV (Threshold Limit Value) or PEL (Permissible Exposure Limit). |
| <p>Exposure guidelines Benomyl: PEL (OSHA): 15 mg./m. 3, total dust, 8 hr. TLV (ACGIH): 0.84 ppm., 10 mg./m. 3, 8 hr.</p> | PEL and TLV identify the concentration of chemical in the air, below which workers would not be expected to experience health problems during a 40-hour work week. |

Section 9. Physical and chemical properties.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Color Yellow liquid. | Describes the physical appearance of the chemical. |
| Odor characteristic Kerosene odor. | Describes the product odor for detection purposes. |
| pH 4.1 Aqueous solution. | pH values ranging from 0 to 2 and from 12 to 14 are usually corrosive to skin and eyes. This also indicates that it may be helpful to neutralizing a chemical spill. |
| Specific gravity (Water = 1) 0.95 | The weight of the chemical compared to the weight of an equal volume of water. |
| Vapor density (Air = 1) 4.8 | Weight of the chemical's vapor compared to air. Vapors with weight values less than 1 rise. Those with weight values greater than 1 sink and concentrate. |
| Vapor pressure 3 mm Hg @ 25°C or 77°F | Measurement of the potential of the chemical to convert to a gaseous form. |
| Boiling point 176°C (349°F) | Temperature at which a liquid becomes a vapor. |
| Solubility in water 0.1 ppm | A measurement of the amount of material that will dissolve in water. Materials with a value of 100 ppm and less are considered to be relatively insoluble, while those with values greater than 1,000 ppm are considered very soluble. |

Section 10. Stability and reactivity.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|--|---|
| Chemical stability Stable at normal temperatures and storage conditions. | Usually general terms to describe the chemical's stability. At times, temperatures will be listed at which the chemical becomes unstable. |
| Hazardous polymerization Will not occur. | This is a statement that states if the product will react dangerously with itself to form other products. |
| Conditions to avoid Avoid freezing temperatures. | Describes conditions under which the product or its container may become damaged or cause a hazardous condition. |
| Chemical incompatibility Oxidizing agents. | Describes other materials which may react with the product. |
| Hazardous decomposition products HCl, HF, NO ₃ during combustion. | A list of by-products that are formed when the product burns or is subjected to other conditions. |

Section 11. Toxicological information.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|--|---|
| Acute Data | |
| Eye irritation Rabbit: substantial irritation. | Consequences of short-term exposure to eyes. |
| Skin irritation Rabbit: severe irritation. | Consequences of short-term exposure to skin. |
| Oral LD₅₀ Rat: 3600 mg./kg. | Toxicity of short-term exposure from ingestion. The LD ₅₀ is the dose level that is expected to cause the death of 50% of the test animals. |
| Dermal LD₅₀ Rabbit: >5000 mg./kg. | Toxicity by absorption through the skin. |
| Inhalation LC₅₀ Rabbit: 11 mg./L for 4 hr. | Toxicity from breathing dusts, fumes or vapors. The LC ₅₀ is the concentration of dust, fume or mist that is expected to kill 50% of the test animals. |
| Skin sensitization Guinea pig: sensitizing. | An allergic reaction on tissue after repeated exposure. |
| Chronic Data | |
| Chronic toxicity studies Liver (alteration and enlargement) and thyroid effects (hormone imbalances) at high dose levels (rats); decreased body weight gains. | Adverse health effects resulting from long-term exposure to a chemical or long-term effect from short exposures. |
| Mutagenicity data This product does not pose a mutagenic hazard. | Effects of exposure to a substance that may change the genetic material in a living cell. |
| Reproductive/teratology data No birth defects were noted in rats and rabbits given dithiopyr technical orally during pregnancy. No effects were seen on the ability of male or female rats to reproduce when fed dithiopyr technical for two successive generations. | Effects of exposure that may affect the ability to reproduce viable offspring or cause birth defects. |
| Carcinogenicity data Benign thyroid tumors (species-specific). The US EPA lists prodiamine as a possible human carcinogen based on limited evidence from animal studies. | The ability of a substance to cause cancer. |

Section 12. Ecological information.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Eco-acute toxicity Bluegill sunfish, 96-hour LC ₅₀ : 0.47 mg./l Rainbow trout, 96-hour LC ₅₀ : 0.46 mg./l Daphnia magna, 48-hour LC ₅₀ : 5.2 mg./l Bobwhite quail, 5-day dietary LC ₅₀ : > 5620 ppm Mallard duck, 5-day dietary LC ₅₀ : > 5620 ppm Bobwhite quail, Acute oral LC ₅₀ : > 2250 mg/kg Honeybee, LD ₅₀ : 81 g./bee | This section describes indicator species that were used in toxicity testing and values. |
| Environmental fate Photolysis: Unstable, half-life less than 1 hour. Hydrolysis: Stable soil half-life: 2 months. | The breakdown processes of a chemical when exposed to various environmental elements. Photolysis: Exposure to sunlight. Hydrolysis: Exposure to water. |

Section 13. Disposal considerations.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Procedures For disposal, incinerate this material at a facility that complies with local, state, and federal regulations. | Directions and limitations for disposal of the material. |

Section 14. Transport information.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Proper shipping name Organophosphorous pesticide, liquid, toxic, flammable (Methyl parathion, Aromatic solvent naphtha). | The official shipping name and description that should appear on US Department of Transportation (DOT) shipping papers. |
| Primary hazard class Class 6.1. | DOT recognizes 9 classes of hazardous materials. Typically, the lower the number, the more hazardous the material. |
| Identification No. UN 3082 | The number assigned for identification by the United Nations (UN) convention. |
| Special information Marine pollutant. | Special provisions for a particular hazardous material. |
| Packing group II. | Specifies one or more packing groups for the material based on the hazard of great (I), medium (II), or minor (III) significance. May assist in selecting the proper packaging materials and labels. |

Section 15. Regulatory information.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|--|---|
| Workplace classification This product is considered hazardous under the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200). | The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's interpretation of the product's hazard to workers. |
| SARA Title 3 Section 311/312 Categorizations (40 CFR 372): This product is a hazardous chemical under 29 CFR 1910.1200, and is categorized as an immediate and delayed health, and flammability physical hazard. | Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act (SARA) category. SARA requires reporting any spill of any hazardous substance. |
| TSCA status Exempt from TSCA. | Toxic Substances Control Act statement regarding its regulation. This law covers the production and distribution of commercial and industrial chemicals in the United States. |
| RCRA classification Reactive | Resource Conservation and Recovery Act's classification. RCRA regulates hazardous waste generators and transporters. |
| CERCLA reportable quantity This material contains no hazardous or extremely hazardous substances as defined by CERCLA. | Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act's classification. CERCLA provides EPA authority to respond to releases of hazardous substances. |

Section 16. Other information.

| SDS contents (sample) | Explanation |
|---|---|
| National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) ratings Health = 2; Flammability = 1; Reactivity = 0. | NFPA's scale: 0 = least; 1 = slight; 2 = moderate; 3 = high; 4 = extreme. Classification and properties of hazardous chemical data. |
| Issue date 1/2/1992 | Original SDS publishing date. |
| Revised date 2/28/2005 | Date that SDS was amended. |
| Supersedes 2/3/99 | Date of previous SDS. |
| Responsibility for MSDS Acme Agrosiences | Manufacturer. |
| Address P.O. Box 12345 9330 Chemical Causeway Indianapolis, IN 12345 | Location of manufacturer. |
| Telephone 800-555-1234 | Manufacturer's telephone. Manufacturers generally man this line 24 hours per day. |