



MSDS

By SFC Robert E. Price and SFC Alcides Santana

MSDS—neither a disease nor a meat tenderizer—is another one of those pesky acronyms that every service member or DoD civilian needs to know about. MSDS is the acronym for Material Safety Data Sheet. You'll find this handy little sheet of paper on everything from common spray paint to the most dangerous chemicals.

They weren't put on for decorations, either. In fact they're required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), as well as various Army Regulations (ARs). Regulations aside, these pieces of paper can literally save your life and the lives of your soldiers.

There are an estimated 575,000 existing chemical products. They pose a serious problem for the vast majority of our soldiers since many will come into contact with quite a variety of these potentially hazardous materials. These chemicals can cause or contribute to heart ailments, kidney and lung damage, sterility, cancer, burns and rashes. It's our responsibility to make sure all our soldiers are protected from these hazards. In fact, we would be derelict in our duties if we as NCOs failed to properly protect our soldiers from these chemicals.

MSDS sheets are like having the Poison Prevention Hot Line at your fingertips. These sheets tell you virtually everything about the particular chemicals that you work with. Facts such as: flash point, if the use of a respirator is required; first aid information, if contact with skin or eyes is dangerous; and unlimited information on the makeup, storage and use of the product is listed right on the MSDS. MSDS information sheets are relatively new and in the few years they've been around they've saved lives, prevented injuries and saved countless dollars. NCOs should make it a top priority to learn about these lifesaving sheets of paper.

When you receive items from the supply system that have MSDS sheets attached there's an obligation to user and supervisor to read and thoroughly understand all that is involved with the use of the product. The sheet will be posted on or near the product where all can see and heed the information. It's not, repeat *not* to be thrown in the trash along with the other packing materials. Remember, this sheet of paper can save a life or prevent serious injury to you and your soldiers.

Industry and the military have spent millions of dollars and time to test and develop ways to protect personnel from death and injury caused by the improper handling of hazardous materials. As responsible NCOs, we can take the extra time and effort to become familiar with and properly post these little sheets of paper known as MSDS.

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Force

By Jim Collins

A lot of NCOs play with less than a full deck when planning operations. And if you're one of the NCOs who's not playing with the wild card in that deck—the risk assessment card—then you're not playing the odds correctly when it comes to protecting the force. This card plays with any hand you deal, or with any hand you're dealt.

Listen to what SGM Jim Wertman (now commander, Company A, USASMA at Fort Bliss) has to say about the card (when he was CSM of the 4th Bn-7th Inf Div in 1990):

"In a battalion-sized unit when we

Basic Operational Process

MISSION PHASE	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	SAFETY ACTIVITY
Mission received. Develop commander's intent.	Initial estimate. Evaluate mission. Develop alternatives. Apply insight from previous mission and experiences. Formulate concept. Decision making.	Mission analysis. Risk assessment. Hazard assessment. Risk reduction action.
Prepare plans and orders.	Mission briefing. Develop detailed concept of operations. Develop plans and orders. Issue orders. Coordinate.	Safety input to briefings, orders and SOPs. Special briefings.
Prepare for execution.	Prepare terrain, equipment and troops. Make necessary changes. Coordinate.	Safety checks. Explain safety measures. Special training. Outside support required.
Execute operations	Lead tactical and logistical operations. Adapt plans as required. Coordinate.	Enforce standards and safety guidance. Review changes for risk implications.
Execute operations	Assess performance, weaknesses and strengths. Identify future action required.	Assess risk management, effectiveness. Implement changes required.

The risk assessment process is part and parcel of the overall operation—*totally integrated*. Although operations and safety are shown separately, integration begins the moment the mission is conceived and continues until the last insight from the after action review is acted upon.