OSHA's Laboratory Standard: Requirements for Employee Information and Training

OSHA's Laboratory Standard (CFR 1910.1450) has a prescribed format to follow for sharing information and training employees. This action is to ensure that employees are aware of and know how to work with chemical hazards in the work area. Middle and high school science labs are no exception to this rule. Employee training must be done at the time of the initial assignment and before new exposure situations. For the school safety trainer, this translates into providing training for new or transferred employees and, for employees being exposed to new chemicals.

Minimal expectations for the information program include the following items:

1. The contents of the Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) and the Laboratory Standard;
2. The location and availability of the employer's CHP;
3. The permissible exposure limits (PELS) and/or recommended exposure limits for hazardous chemicals;
4. Signs and symptoms associated with hazardous chemical exposure;
5. Location and availability of reference materials, including Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) on hazards, storage, handling, and disposal in the workplace.

Minimal expectations for the training program include the following items:

1. The components of the CHP and procedures for implementation;
2. Chemical hazards in the work area and protective measures employees can take;
3. Employer procedures which effect protection, including engineering controls, work practices, personal protective equipment (PPE);
4. Methods and observations that workers can use to detect the presence of hazardous chemicals; e.g., monitoring procedures, smell, appearance.

The employer is required to evaluate the effectiveness of the CHP at least annually and update it as necessary. It would be prudent to also do refresher training on the CHP for employees using the same schedule. An alternative is to provide capsules of training each month at department meetings.

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