

BOWDOIN COLLEGE

A Brief User's Guide to MSDSonline

Storing, Archiving, and Retrieval of Safety Data Sheets

What is MSDSonline?

MSDSonline is a digital, web-based system for storing, archiving, and retrieving Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for chemical campus-wide. Safety Data Sheets are part of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Right to Understand laws found in the Hazard Communication Standard (Hazcom) – 29 CFR 1910.1200. The term SDS has replaced the more commonly known term Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) when OSHA adopted the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labeling Chemicals in 2012. **Why is this important?**

Maintenance of a chemical inventory and associated SDSs are required under federal law. They are summary documents that provide information about the hazards of a product and safety precautions. SDSs are usually written by the manufacturer or supplier of the product, and provide more detailed hazard information about the product than the label. SDSs are an important resource in communicating product hazards, how to use the product safely, what to expect if the recommendations are not followed, how to recognize symptoms of exposure, and what to do if emergencies occur.

Chemical Inventorying

First, it is important to verify the inventory of the hazardous chemicals used in your respective department/areas. This can be done by comparing the printed SDS (formerly MSDS) binder, traditionally maintained, to the chemicals or products in your department's inventory. Be sure to remove any chemicals from your areas that are no longer used or have expired, assuming they are deemed unusable. Safety Data Sheets for chemicals that are no longer in your department's inventory shall be retained for 30 years, so they must be archived in MSDSonline. Alternatively, you may maintain a list of chemicals or substances and where and when they were used in your workplace. Safety Data Sheets are not required to be retained for household consumer products when the products are used in the workplace in the same manner that a consumer would use them in their homes. Examples include incidental use of office supplies such as markers, correction fluid, and glass cleaner. However, employees who are required to work with household consumer products in a manner that results in a duration and frequency of exposure greater than what a normal consumer would experience have a right to understand the properties of those hazardous chemicals. Therefore, it is required that the SDS's for such products be available. An example would be Housekeepers who are required to use general cleaning products throughout their work shift. Safety Data Sheets must be available for these employees because they are using cleaning products for extended periods of time during their work day and repeatedly day-after-day. For Bowdoin College, the SDSs will be available digitally on MSDSonline.com, or they can be printed. Once the inventory is complete, departments shall back-up their SDS e-Binder on an external storage device such as a desktop computer, CD, or flash drive.

Each department/area should have an "eBinder," and if not, request to have one created with the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Office. An eBinder is similar to a folder within a filing cabinet where departments or areas can access and store their own SDSs. Depending on how your department sets up its eBinders, you may have multiple eBinders to choose from. For example, Dining Services has four eBinders representing each dining area (Moulton Union, Smith Union, Thorne Hall, and the Organic Garden) where hazardous chemicals are used.

Entering the Digital Site – MSDSonline

Start by clicking on the following link: [Bowdoin MSDSOnline.com](http://BowdoinMSDSOnline.com). **(note: you do not need to enter a user name and password. Click "cancel" when prompted to enter a username and password)**

Search

When you reach the page, you will be able to search MSDSonline's database of over 6 million chemicals by clicking on the "**MSDSonline Search**" icon located at the bottom left hand column. Don't confuse this with "MSDS Search", which are chemicals on campus that have already been uploaded. The MSDSonline Search engine allows you to search chemical by the product name, CAS#, manufacturer, or product code and request to add them to your eBinder. Be aware that the search won't return many, if any, results if you misspell or type it incorrectly. We have found that if you are somewhat vague you may acquire more results to choose from.

Which SDS to choose for your eBinder?

This website's information is user generated. Often times, certain chemicals will have already been uploaded to the website. Choose the SDS that matches your product information and is labeled as "**GHS**" compliant. Should you not find a current GHS complaint SDS, upload the most current one.

Adding SDSs

Once you have found the chemical you wish to add, select the checkbox on the left side on the pdf SDS. You will then click on the icon labeled "Assign to company list" which is pop up once you check the box. A new page will appear asking for "Approval Details." Simply enter your name or e-mail and select the location you'd like it to be added and click continue.

The next step will ask for "Submission Details" where you will be presented with 3 choices: New Material Requiring a Safety Data Sheet, Existing Material Requiring a Current Safety Data Sheet or Research/Reference Purposes Only. Most often you would probably choose *Existing Material Requiring a Current Safety Data Sheet*. However, you may be choosing "Research/Reference Purposes Only" if you are archiving. If you have to dispose of unused or unwanted chemicals, you will still need these SDSs to be added. Remember, chemicals used in the workplace must be archived in the database for 30 years.

Once you have submitted all of the information, the chemical may take a couple of days to appear in your folder since each chemical must be approved by the EHS office.

Requesting a current GHS compliant SDS

If all else fails and you cannot find a specific chemical or product at MSDSonline.com, there is a way to request the most current SDS. Once you type the name of the product, and your search returns no results, you will be given an alternative option to request a SDS on the right side of the screen. You will be prompted to fill out a form and once it is submitted the EHS Office will review. Once approved by the EHS office, MSDSonline will be asked to Upload the current SDS as requested.

If a GHS compliant Safety Data Sheet has not been issued by the company, use the most current available. Unfortunately, this does occur occasionally as some manufacturers have not met the GHS-compliant deadline for updating SDSs. The good news is, as soon as the manufacturer updates their respective SDSs, and MSDSonline obtains a copy, it will automatically be updated in Bowdoin College's online system.

Searching Department/Area eBinders

You can retrieve department/area SDSs by clicking on the **MSDS Search** tab at the top of the screen under the Bowdoin logo. This will allow you to search Bowdoin College's "filing cabinet" of all the SDSs that have been added from the departments/areas. Under the MSDS Search, typing the product name, manufacturer, CAS#, or product code, and then click on the magnifying glass to the right of the Search bar. If the SDS is in any of the department/area eBinders, it will appear below the Search bar. If you know the department/area where the chemical is used, you can also search by using the "Locations" drop arrow, below the MSDS Search bar. Scroll down the list until you find the department/area where the chemical is used; they are organized alphabetically by department and then area. SDSs within the selected eBinder will appear below the Search bar, and you can narrow the search further by typing the name or part of the chemical name in the MSDS Search bar. This will allow you pull up those SDSs in

the department/area eBinder of interest that match the criteria you typed. If these two methods fail to retrieve the SDS of interest, you can search MSDSonline's database as outlined in the [Search](#) section above

Assistance

If you require assistance, do not hesitate to contact the EHS Office:

Charly Wojtysiak– 207-798-4132 cwojtysi@bowdoin.edu

Michael Halko 207-725-3763. mhalko@bowdoin.edu