

## What information should be available to an EMPLOYEE?

Employers must provide their employees with the following information:

- ◆ Common names/trade names of the substances including the chemical names;
- ◆ The level at which exposure to the substance is hazardous, if known;
- ◆ Effects and symptoms of exposure at hazardous levels;
- ◆ The potential for flammability, explosion and reactivity of the substance;
- ◆ Appropriate emergency treatment;
- ◆ Proper procedures for safe use and exposure to substances;
- ◆ Proper protective equipment for safe use; and
- ◆ Procedures for clean-up of leaks and spills.

It is *the employee's right* to ask the employer about the Right-to-Know Law. It's an easy way to ensure safety at work.

## Who enforces the Right-to-Know Law?

The Right-to-Know Law is enforced by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training's Occupational Safety Unit. Employers who are not in compliance may be fined up to \$5,000 per day until they bring the company to compliance.

## For more information on the RI Right-to-Know Law:



Contact the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training  
Division of Workforce Regulation and Safety  
**Occupational Safety Right-to-Know Unit**  
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920  
Telephone: (401) 462-8559 • Fax: (401) 462-8576  
[www.dlt.ri.gov/occusafe](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/occusafe)



# Rhode Island Right-to-Know Law



In today's workplace employees are often exposed to hazardous substances. Some employers and employees don't pay attention to these substances until it's too late.

You have the right to know. *You need to know.* The Rhode Island Right-to-Know Law can help you by informing you of your rights and responsibilities as an employee or an employer.

**Not knowing about the  
hazardous substances you work with is  
the GREATEST HAZARD of all!**

## What is the Rhode Island Right-to-Know Law?



Under the RI Right-to-Know General Law, (R.I. G.L. 28-21), employers must inform their employees about the hazards of certain substances used in the workplace. They must also inform their local fire department by providing them with a list of substances used on-site.

Employers must educate and train each employee about these substances and their hazards before they are used, and annually thereafter.

The law is designed to help employers protect their employees. By learning more about the toxic or hazardous properties of the substances in the workplace, employers and employees will be in compliance with safe work practices.

### To whom does the law apply?

The law applies to any employer (corporation, individual or association) who, at any given time, uses or stores more than two gallons or ten pounds of:

- ◆ a designated substance;
- ◆ a mixture containing more than 1% of a designated substance; or
- ◆ a mixture containing a carcinogen, mutagen or teratogen in amounts of 10,000 per part or greater must comply with the law.

### What is a toxic or hazardous substance?

There are more than 1,100 substances designated as hazardous on the official list maintained by the RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT). They are listed online at [www.dlt.ri.gov/occusafe/rightToKnow.htm](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/occusafe/rightToKnow.htm), under *Resources*. Some of the more familiar substances include ammonia, carbon dioxide, nitrogen and sulfuric acid.

**By law, employers *must* have their hazardous substance list available for their employees to review at any time, as requested.**

## What is the responsibility of the EMPLOYER?

The employer is responsible to inform employees about the toxic or hazardous substances they work with. It is a good business practice and *it is the law*.

1. Employers **must post a sign in a conspicuous location in the workplace** informing employees of the Right-to-Know Law. This poster should also display the location where the list of chemicals in use are stored. A Safety Data Sheet for each substance must be available for employees to review.

Posters are available free of charge from DLT at [www.dlt.ri.gov](http://www.dlt.ri.gov) or by calling the DLT Business Workforce Center at 1-888-616-JOBS.

Safety Data Sheets are available from the substance manufacturer or supplier or by contacting the Federal Environmental Protection Agency's Chemical Substances Information Network at (617) 565-3384 or the NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation Program at (617) 565-1440.

2. Upon request from an employee, employers **must grant access to the hazardous substance information within three working days**. If the employer does not comply, a formal complaint may be registered against the company and the employee may refuse to work with a toxic substance until such information is provided.

3. Employers **must maintain an annual list of substances** used in the workplace. Each list must be kept by the employer for a period of 30 years. They must also **provide an outline of a written training program** for all employees.

4. Employers **must provide the designated substance list**, arranged by specific work area location, to the local fire department. Also, Safety Data Sheets must be provided to fire authorities and to the RI DLT upon request.

5. Employers who use or store hazardous substances are required to **register annually with the RI Department of Labor and Training** by submitting a list of toxic and hazardous substances and proof of employee training.

