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## Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems (WHMIS) Policy

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**Department Policy Number:**

170 004

**Effective Date:**

May 1, 2004

**Purpose**

Athabasca University employees use a variety of materials while conducting the day-to-day operations. The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is a national system designed and legislated to ensure employees are informed about hazardous materials to minimize or eliminate risks and protect employee health.

**Definitions**

- Hazardous Materials** can harm people, plants, animals and the environment.
- Long term exposure, even small quantities, may be harmful or cause permanent damage.
  - Immediate exposure may cause acute symptoms.
- Controlled Products** any product, material or substance that is included in any of the six WHMIS classes:
- Compressed gas
  - Flammable and combustible material
  - Oxidizing material
  - Poisonous and infectious material
  - Corrosive material
  - Dangerously reactive chemicals.
- Routes of Entry** toxic effects of the controlled product depend on how you come into contact with the hazardous material, which may enter the body through:
- inhalation – breathing in dust particles, fumes, mists or vapors can irritate or burn air passages, e.g. formaldehyde



- ingestion – eating, drinking, or smoking while handling chemicals
- eye or skin absorption – splashes or spills can cause dermatitis, inflammation, or irritation of the skin.

**Degree of Hazard** the amount or degree of hazard is determined by:

- Toxicity of a substance
- Dosage
- Duration of exposure.

**Acute Poisoning** hazardous products can cause immediate harm e.g. H2S.

**Chronic Poisoning** may take hours, days, years, or even decades before you are aware of the damage that has been done, as some hazardous products slowly cause irreversible damage e.g. asbestos.

**Consumer Products** products purchased in a store for personal care or household use, not for use in the workplace. Even though it may be the same product, the intent is only to regulate chemicals in the workplace, not the home.

## Policy

To reduce the risk of a chemical exposure employees are expected to comply with WHMIS legislation and Safety Code Part 29 and therefore be familiar with labeling and material safety data sheets (MSDS) of controlled products used in the workplace.

All employees working in close proximity of controlled products will receive WHMIS training. New employees who will be working with controlled products must take WHMIS training before working with the controlled products.

Human Resources coordinate and document WHMIS training.

All controlled products on campus will have a supplier or workplace label or placard.

The Manager/Department Head will ensure the MSDS is obtained from the supplier when receiving a controlled product on any Athabasca University campus.

The Manager/Department Head will ensure that MSDS are filed at the work site where they will be readily accessible to employees. MSDS must be updated every three years.

The Manager/Department Head will ensure that MSDS are available and posted near the work site where controlled products are used.

Managers will ensure that employees are notified if a controlled product is to be used in an open area or where fumes may migrate.



Facilities and Services will advise all employees of painting and flooring replacement schedules at least 48 hours before beginning work.

Employees will immediately report any concerns regarding the WHMIS program to the Manager/Department Head.

### **Regulation**

This policy applies to all departments and organizations established by Athabasca University.

### **Procedure**

### **Approved By**

President, May 21, 2004.

### **Amended Date/Motion No.**

### **Related References, Policies and Procedures**

[Occupational Health and Safety Policy.](#)

### **Applicable Legislation/Regulation**

[Alberta Workplace Health and Safety General Safety Regulation \(AR448/83\) Section 15.](#)

[Amendment Section 14.1\(1\)–14.1\(8\) and Safety Code Part 29;](#)

[Workers Compensation Board Act;](#)

[Workplace Health and Safety Provincial WHMIS laws;](#)

[Chemical Hazards Regulations.](#)

### **Responsible Position/Department**

Director of Human Resources.

### **Keywords**