

As WHMIS 2015 standards continue to be implemented over the next two years, workers should make sure they get updated training when new materials arrive on the worksite.



Training for WHMIS

By Lynn Welburn

As global trade grows, workers in British Columbia increasingly find themselves using new and potentially hazardous materials and products on the job. To reduce risks, updated Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) guidelines are continuing to be phased in.

While Canadian WHMIS regulations began in 1988, in 2015, Canada aligned WHMIS with the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) due to products being used from all parts of the world.

“Before, each country had their own hazard system,” says Colin Murray, senior manager of WorkSafeBC’s Risk Analysis Unit. “The new system is not because there is suddenly some new danger but it’s a better risk

communication tool. It’s more consistent and has greater universal information.

“There are very serious health and safety implications when handling these materials. The new system is about communicating those hazards and risks more clearly.”

Changes to the WHMIS 2015 include some reclassification of materials and products, revised safety data sheet and labelling formats, and new pictograms and standardized phrases that indicate the risks and handling procedures. WHMIS 2015 came into effect in February of that year, so some manufacturers and suppliers have already changed labels and safety data sheets.

During 2017, workplaces using WHMIS 2015 hazardous products should begin implementing the new system and offer education and training to all affected employees. If only using WHMIS 1988

products, workplaces have until the end of 2018 to completely change to the new system, Murray says.

“Workplaces have extra time but they have to make sure that workers are up-to-speed on both systems if there are any products or materials using the new system on site,” says Murray.

There are five major points workers should keep in mind as the changes come into place, says Murray.

1 Who should get training?

All new employees should be educated and trained in hazards pertaining to their jobsite. Experienced employees should get refresher courses at least annually.

2 When should training happen?

As well as the times mentioned above, you should get updated training anytime there’s a change in work conditions or when new products or materials are introduced to the jobsite.

3 Should I know both systems?

Yes. As workplaces add WHMIS 2015 products and materials, workers must be trained and educated on the hazards.

4 How do I get training?

Your employer is responsible for education and training under WHMIS regulations. The employer may provide those services, or employ a qualified person or agency to provide the education and training.

5 What should my education and training include?

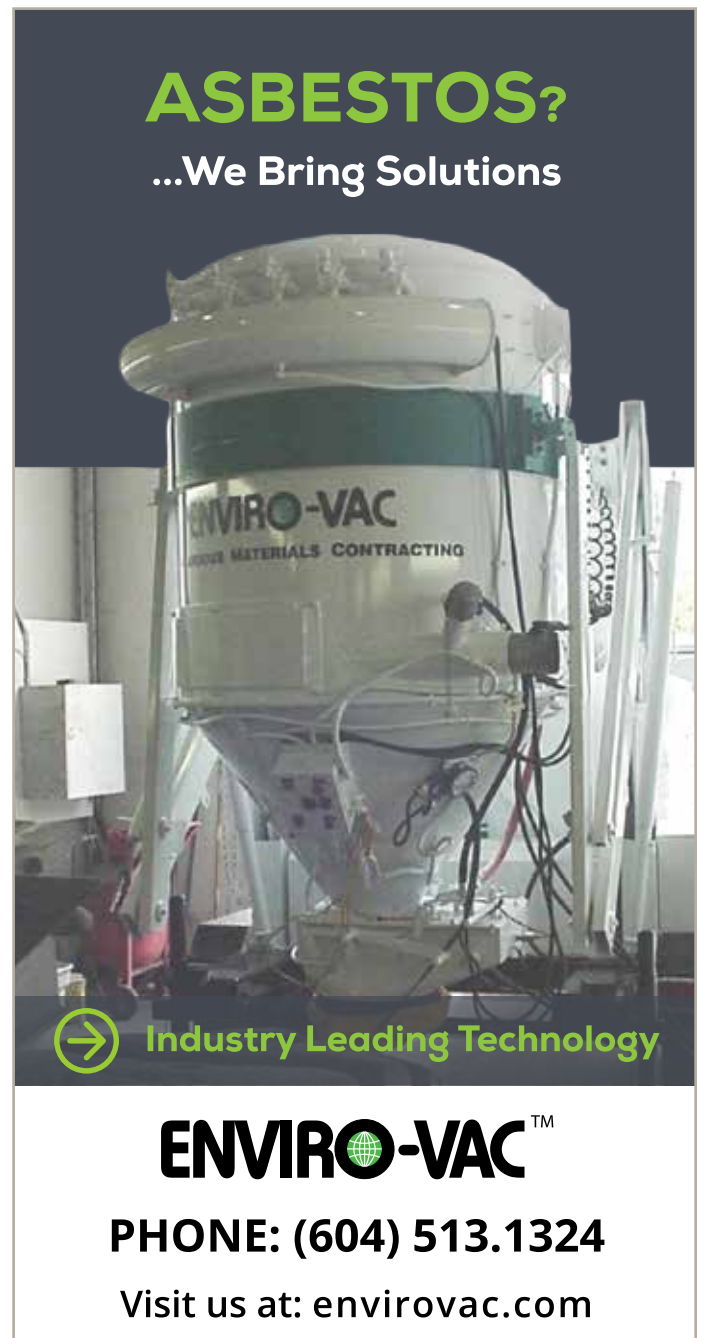
You should be taught to recognize the different supplier and workplace labels, and understand the meaning of the information on those labels. Your workplace should also have material safety data sheets and safety data sheets readily available; job-specific procedures for safe use, handling, and disposal; and the procedures to follow in case of an emergency involving hazardous products.

Check out WorkSafeBC’s wide variety of WHMIS resources online by searching “WHMIS” at worksafebc.com. You can also find information on the following websites:

- Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/whmis-simdut/faq-eng.php
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/general.html ☺

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—Colin Murray, WorkSafeBC senior manager, Risk Analysis Unit



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