1. General Information

Under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations (Section 346) each workplace must ensure that:

- a register of hazardous chemicals used, handled or stored at the workplace is prepared and kept at the workplace; and
- the register is maintained to ensure the information in the register is up-to-date.

and the register must include:

- a list of hazardous chemicals used, handled or stored; and
- the current safety data sheet for each hazardous chemical listed.

However Section 344 of the Regulations provides that commonly used household consumer products used in the workplace do not need to be recorded in the register when used in:

- quantities that are consistent with household use; and
- a way that is consistent with household use; and
- a way that is incidental to the nature of the work carried out by a worker using the hazardous chemical.

A Hazardous Substances Register must be maintained in every Primary Health Care (PHC) remote health centre. The Register is to list products in use in the health centre which give potential exposure of workers (and others) to hazardous substances but are not considered to be commonly used household products, such as fly spray, sunscreen, etc unless kept in quantities above that which would be usually kept for household use. The Register is housed in a standardised folder, which is to be readily accessible.

The folder must also to include a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each product listed in the Register. Manufacturers or importers of hazardous substances produce SDS, to provide the user / handler of the product with information to minimise any health risk while using the substance. SDS information can be used for various purposes related to safe and appropriate use of the product, but also provides important information that may be utilised in managing cases of exposure and/or poisoning by the substance. SDS’s can be found on the ChemAlert website and should be printed and placed into the Hazardous Substances Register Folder in the health centre. See Section 4.2 for further details re access to SDSs via the ChemAlert website.

Note: for household products see the product label for information which includes first aid advice.

2. Definitions (Ref: Hazardous substances and dangerous goods - Safe Work Australia)

Hazardous Substances: are those that, following worker exposure, can have an adverse effect on health. Examples of hazardous substances include poisons, substances that cause burns or skin and eye irritation, and substances that may cause cancer. Many hazardous substances are also classified as dangerous goods. A substance is deemed to be a hazardous substance if it meets the classification criteria specified in the Approved Criteria for Classifying Hazardous Substances [NOHSC:1008(2004)] (Approved Criteria).

Register: means a listing of all hazardous substances which are used or produced in the workplace and the SDS for all hazardous substances, as required by the National Model Regulations for the Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances [NOHSC: 1005 (1994)].
Safety Data Sheet (SDS): means a document that describes the identity, chemical and physical properties, health and environmental hazard information, uses, precautions for use, safe handling procedures and safe disposal procedures of a hazardous chemical. Schedule 7 of the WHS Regulations prescribes what information must be contained in a SDS.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Primary Health Care Staff

- Be aware of the presence and role of the Hazardous Substance Register in the workplace
- Refer to SDS information as appropriate

3.2 Primary Health Care Manager (PHCM)

- Ensure the presence of the Hazardous Substance Register in an appropriate location in the health centre
- Ensure staff are orientated to the location and use of the Hazardous Substances Register
- Utilise the Hazardous Substance Register - Template to record all chemicals utilised in the health centre (including those used by external providers / contractors) in the Register, the Register is up to date, and the relevant SDS’s are maintained in the Folder

3.3 PHC Workplace Health and Safety Representative

- Assist health centre staff with requests for SDSs
- Conduct an annual audit of the product list on the PHC ChemAlert site
- Consider recommendations for products for inclusion on ChemAlert
- Recommend additions / deletions to the WH&S Unit Administrator for the ChemAlert site

4. Procedure

4.1 Use of the Hazardous Substance Register

The Hazardous Substance Register should be located in a readily accessible and appropriate area of the health centre, usually the main office area. The SDS’s should be referred to, ensuring practices around the storage and use of products is appropriate.

Use of SDS information in the management of poisonings is fundamentally useful, however it is important to note that the SDS information must be used in conjunction with usual clinical management obligations including the use of the CARPA STM, supply / administration of medicine subject to Section 250 of the NT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act (MPTGA), and Duty RMP Telephone Consultations initiated as appropriate.

4.2 Maintenance of the Hazardous Substances Register

PHCMs must maintain a current register and include any products used in the health centre, which necessitate the inclusion of a specific SDS.

SDS information can be found on the ChemAlert website:

- Click on the ChemAlert link and then the on ‘Anonymous User’
- Type the product name into the search field to locate the required product.
- Click on the ‘SDS’ link to view the Safety Data Sheet
- Print and place the SDS in the Hazardous Substances Register Folder in the health centre.

Note: a link to ChemAlert and a ChemAlert User Guide is also available via the Workplace Health & Safety intranet site under WHS Quick Links.

Further advice may be obtained from the Professional Practice Nurse or DoH WH&S Unit in the region.
4.3 Maintenance of the Product List for Primary Health Care (PHC)

An annual audit of the product list on the PHC ChemAlert site (CAHS and TEHS) will be completed by the relevant PHC Workplace Health and Safety Committee for the region. Staff may recommend products for inclusion on ChemAlert to the regional PHC Workplace Health and Safety Committee for consideration.

Additions and deletions will be recommended to the WH&S Unit Administrator for the ChemAlert site.

5. Forms

Hazardous Substance Register - Template

6. References and Supporting Documents

Related Atlas Items:
- Duty RMP Telephone Consultations
- Hazard Identification
- Section 250 NT MPTGA
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations
- NT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act
- DoH Workplace Health and Safety
  - ChemAlert website, provides access to SDS
- NT WorkSafe
- Safe Work Australia website:
  - Hazardous substances and dangerous goods - Safe Work Australia
  - Approved Criteria for Classifying Hazardous Substances [NOHSC: 1008 (2004)]
  - National Model Regulations for the Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances [NOHSC: 1005 (1994)]
- Remote Primary Health Care Manuals website
  - Central Australia Rural Practitioners Association (CARPA) Standard Treatment Manual