



What are Hazardous Materials

A **hazardous material** is any item or agent (biological, chemical, physical) which has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors. **Hazardous materials professionals** are responsible for and properly qualified to manage such materials. This includes managing and/or advising other managers on such items at any point in their life-cycle, from process planning and development of new products; through manufacture, distribution and use; to disposal, cleanup and remediation.

Hazardous materials are defined and regulated in the United States primarily by laws and regulations administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Each has its own definition of a "hazardous material."

OSHA's definition includes any substance or chemical which is a "health hazard" or "physical hazard," including: chemicals which are carcinogens, toxic agents, irritants, corrosives, sensitizers; agents which act on the hematopoietic system; agents which damage the lungs, skin, eyes, or mucous membranes; chemicals which are combustible, explosive, flammable, oxidizers, pyrophorics, unstable-reactive or water-reactive; and chemicals which in the course of normal handling, use, or storage may produce or release dusts, gases, fumes, vapors, mists or smoke which may have any of the previously mentioned characteristics. (Full definitions can be found at 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1910.1200.)

EPA incorporates the OSHA definition, and adds any item or chemical which can cause harm to people, plants, or animals when released by spilling, leaking, pumping, pouring, emitting, emptying, discharging, injecting, escaping, leaching, dumping or disposing into the environment. (40 CFR 355 contains a list of over 350 hazardous and extremely hazardous substances.)

DOT defines a hazardous material as any item or chemical which, when being transported or moved, is a risk to public safety or the environment, and is regulated as such under the: Hazardous Materials Regulations (49 CFR 100-180); International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code; Dangerous Goods Regulations of the International Air Transport Association; Technical Instructions of the International Civil Aviation Organization; U.S. Air Force Joint Manual, Preparing Hazardous Materials for Military Air Shipments.

The NRC regulates items or chemicals which are "special nuclear source" or by-product materials or radioactive substances. (See 10 CFR 20).

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