

THE RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

The New Jersey Worker and Community Right to Know Act became law in 1983. It requires public and private employers to give you information about hazardous substances at their workplaces. The Act:

- tells public employees about chemical hazards at their workplace so they can work safely with these hazardous substances;
- helps firefighters, police, and other emergency response personnel adequately plan for and respond to incidents such as fires, explosions or spills;
- provides data for monitoring and tracking hazardous substances in the workplace and the environment.

HOW THE ACT CAN PROTECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Harmful substances may be present at your workplace and at other work sites in your community, or may be released into the environment. They may also be carried home to your family on your work clothes.

Exposure to hazardous substances has been linked to problems such as cancer, birth defects, and heart, lung and kidney diseases. These diseases may develop without prior symptoms, many years after exposure. *As a public employee, you can obtain information about chemical hazards that may harm you or your family from your workplace Right to Know (RTK) central file.*

Knowing about hazardous substances and how they harm you can help you get the proper diagnosis and treatment if you should become sick. More importantly, awareness about hazardous substances and your potential exposure can help you make important decisions about your employment and lifestyle.

HOW THE ACT WORKS

Employers covered by the Act must complete surveys listing the names and amounts of hazardous chemicals stored and used at their work sites.

Right to Know Surveys are completed by public agencies and sent to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS).

Community Right to Know Surveys are completed by private employers and sent to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

Copies of both surveys are sent to local fire and police departments, designated Right to Know county agencies and local emergency planning committees.

Public employers are also required to **label** containers and **train** their employees about hazardous substances at the worksite. Private employers follow the training requirements of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and are required to **label** containers according to OSHA and the New Jersey Right to Know Act.

HOW PUBLIC EMPLOYERS COMPLY WITH THE RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

Public employers are given certain responsibilities under the Act to assist workers in learning about the hazards of the products they work with. They must:

- ✓ Complete the Right to Know Survey
- ✓ Label Containers
- ✓ Provide Right to Know Training
- ✓ Create and Maintain a Right to Know Central File

The public can get copies of these surveys by contacting the NJDHSS or the designated county agencies at the numbers listed in this brochure.

HOW TO USE YOUR WORKPLACE RIGHTS TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH

The Right to Know Act gives public employees certain rights and access to information about chemical hazards at their workplace. This information, kept in the RTK central file, tells workers about job related health risks and ways to reduce or remove their exposure to the chemical hazards. Learn to work safely with chemical hazards to protect your health and the health of your family members. To do so:

1. Work only with labeled containers.
2. Check your workplace RTK Survey to find out which products you use contain hazardous chemicals.
3. Read the Material Safety Data Sheets and Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets about the products you use to find out about any chemicals in the products that may harm you. These are kept in the RTK central file.
4. Attend the RTK training class your employer provides for you. This training tells you about the hazardous materials you work with and how to use them safely. Training must be provided by the employer on paid time.

Use your rights under the Right to Know Act. Work with labeled containers, attend RTK training and obtain information from the RTK central file.

- ◆ You do not have to work with a product if your employer has not given you the ingredient information you requested in writing within five working days. **Call the NJDHSS** for more information before you refuse to work with a product.
- ◆ You can file a complaint against your employer for not complying with the RTK Act. Your ***name will be kept confidential.***

HOW THE ACT IS ENFORCED

The following three state agencies work together to implement the RTK Act:

*New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Right to Know Program
PO Box 368
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0368
(609) 984-2202*

Enforces all provisions of the RTK Act in public workplaces and RTK labeling in private workplaces. The Department prepares Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets, the RTK brochure, and other materials to increase awareness of hazardous chemicals and help public employers comply with the RTK Act. Printed materials are available upon request.

*New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Chemical Release Information & Prevention
PO Box 405
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0405
(609) 292-6714*

Enforces the community provisions of the RTK Act in the private sector (except for labeling). The Department is also responsible for implementing Title III (Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know) of the federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), which establishes requirements for industry regarding emergency planning and reporting of hazardous chemicals.

*New Jersey Department of Labor
Division of Workplace Standards
225 E. State Street
PO Box 386
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0386
(609) 292-7036*

Collects RTK fees from private employers and investigates complaints by public employees who suspect they are being discriminated against for using their rights under the RTK law.

HOW TO OBTAIN INFORMATION LOCALLY

You can get copies of the Right to Know Survey, Community Right to Know Survey, and Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets from your designated Right to Know county agency listed below:

Atlantic	(609) 645-5971 Ext. 4369
Bergen	(201) 599-6150
Burlington	(609) 265-5575
Camden	(609) 374-6045
Cape May	(609) 465-1208
Cumberland	(609) 453-2156
Essex	(201) 228-8152
Gloucester	(609) 262-4200
Hudson	(201) 223-1133
Hunterdon	(908) 788-1351
Mercer	(609) 989-6497
Middlesex	(908) 494-6742
Monmouth	(908) 431-7456
Morris	(201) 285-6113
Ocean	(908) 341-9700 Ext. 7431
Passaic	(201) 225-3643
Salem	(609) 935-7510 Ext. 484
Somerset	(908) 231-7000 Ext. 7506
Sussex	(201) 948-4545
Union	(908) 654-9890
Warren	(908) 689-6693

**YOU HAVE A
RIGHT TO KNOW
ABOUT HAZARDOUS
SUBSTANCES
IN YOUR
WORKPLACE AND
COMMUNITY.
USE IT.**

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW



ABOUT HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES
IN YOUR WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY



Division of Environmental and Occupational Health Services
Right to Know Program