

ChemAlert Chemical Information Management System - Implementation

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Functional Sub group Corporate Administration - Information and data
Clinical/ Patient Services - Incident management
Population Health - Cleaning
Population Health - Disaster management
Personnel/Workforce - Occupational Health & Safety

Summary Outlines the requirement for the public health system to use the ChemAlert system as their chemical register and ensure all hazardous substances and dangerous goods are entered onto the system. Policy also outlines requirements for system governance, administration, staff access and use and the management of information on the System.

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Public Health System Support Division, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, NSW Ambulance Service, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

Audience All staff and managers

Distributed to Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Health Associations Unions, Health Professional Associations and Related Organisations, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals, Tertiary Education Institutes

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Status Active

Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

**ChemAlert Chemical
Information Management
System - Implementation**

January 2009

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1.0 About this document

- 1.1 Title** Implementation of the ChemAlert Chemical Information Management System in the NSW public health system.
- 1.2 Responsibility** Workplace Policy, Workplace Relations and Management Branch, NSW Department of Health.
- 1.3 Version** January 2009.
- 1.4 Updates and feedback** Feedback is welcome, and should be addressed to the Manager, Workplace Policy, NSW Department of Health.
- 1.5 Related policies** PD2005_409 *Workplace Health and Safety – Policy and Better Practice Guide*
GL2006_010 *Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods in NSW Health: Guidelines for Safe Use*
- 1.6 Other related documents** *Australian Standard AS4360:2004 Risk Management National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets (NOHSC)*
NSW Code of Practice for Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances (WorkCover)
- 1.7 Relevant legislation** *NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*
NSW Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001
- 1.8 Definitions**
- ChemAlert (the System)**
Is a proprietary chemical information and management database that enables users to access up to date material safety data sheets, maintain a consolidated register of all hazardous substances and dangerous goods in use at their place of work, maintain stock inventory of chemicals and chemical products on-site, print labels and stock registers, record approvals for the use of new chemicals and assist with prioritising and conducting risk assessments for hazardous substances.
- Employer**
Means any person authorised to exercise the functions of the employer of staff to which this policy applies.

Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)

A material safety data sheet (MSDS) is a document that describes the properties and uses of a substance with sections for identity, hazards, ingredients, first aid measures, personal protective equipment, fire fighting measures, accidental release measures, handling and storage, exposure controls, physical and chemical properties, stability and reactivity, toxicology and ecological information, waste disposal and transport and regulatory information.

NSW public health system

Consists of all area health service, all statutory health corporations, and all affiliated health organisations* in respect of their recognised services, as well as the Ambulance Service of NSW and the Public Health System Support Division (currently includes the Institute for Medical Education and Training, Health Support Services and Health Infrastructure.)

*This policy does not automatically apply to non-declared Affiliated Health Organisations unless they have agreement with the relevant Area Health Service to access and utilise the System.

2.0 NSW Health Policy

2.1 Background

The NSW Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation 2001 requires employers to establish and maintain a register of all hazardous substances and dangerous goods used at the employer's place of work. NSW Health Guideline GL2006_010 *Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods in NSW Health: Guidelines for Safe Use* reflects this requirement, and should be read in conjunction with this Policy.

Chemical registers must include a list of all hazardous substances and dangerous goods used in the workplace, along with their Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), and be accessible to all staff, contractors and others who use or might be exposed to the hazardous substances and dangerous goods used in that workplace. Chemical registers can be paper based or computer based.

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In 2007, in response to requests from public health organisations and the Ambulance Service of NSW, Health Procurement established a statewide contract for access to a single database, to be used to meet the employer obligations for a chemical register.

NSW public health organisations and Ambulance Service of NSW representatives participated in the process to select the successful provider. The ChemAlert Chemical Information Management System (the System) was selected and Chief Executives committed to funding the System.

The System enables employers to maintain a consolidated register of all hazardous substances and dangerous goods in use at their place of work and provides users with access to MSDSs and reports. The System also has the capacity to maintain stock inventory of chemicals and chemical products on-site, print labels and stock registers, record approvals for the use of new chemicals and assist with prioritising and conducting risk assessments for hazardous substances and dangerous goods.

2.2 Purpose and requirements of the policy

The ability of the System to satisfy chemical register and related legislative requirements is dependent upon **all** hazardous substances and dangerous goods being used at the workplace and their MSDSs being entered on the System.

Accordingly, all Employers must ensure that:

- The System forms the basis of their chemical register
- All hazardous substances are listed on the System, along with their MSDSs
- All hazardous substance risk assessments are entered on the System
- The requirements in this document in relation to System governance and administration, staff access and use, and management of information on the System are implemented.

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2.3 Who this policy applies to This policy applies to the NSW public health system. This policy does not automatically apply to non-declared Affiliated Health Organisations unless they have agreement with the relevant Area Health Service to access and utilise the System.

2.4 Responsibilities *Chief Executives* are required to:

- Assign responsibility for ensuring implementation and maintenance of the System
- Ensure that local procedures for the implementation, governance, maintenance and use of the System are developed and communicated to all managers and staff.

Managers/Supervisors are required to:

- Ensure that staff receive suitable and sufficient training to utilise the System
- Ensure local procedures for the implementation, governance, maintenance and use of the System are implemented within their workplace.
- Ensure staff, contractors, occupational health and safety committee members and any other person working at a site have access to a computer and the necessary information on the System, proportionate to their level of risk and responsibility.
- Implement a risk management approach (consultation, identification, assessment, control, review and monitoring) wherever chemical hazards are identified, or prior to the introduction of new chemicals or to making any changes to equipment, the work environment, procedures or systems.

Staff are required to:

- Follow local procedures established for the use of chemicals in the workplace
- Follow local procedures established for the access and use of the System.

The service requirements for RMT (System provider) are contained in the service contract.

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2.5 Implementing the ChemAlert System

Employers must ensure that all local unit/department's details on hazardous substances and dangerous goods in use and any associated risk assessments are entered onto the System and that staff, contractors and others, particularly those in contact with chemicals are provided with access to the relevant information.

Full and effective implementation of the System will **be** supported by the following actions by employers.

2.5.1 System governance and administration

- Nomination of staff with relevant expertise in chemical management to oversee the implementation, administration and monitoring of the System including the maintenance of the security components of System access and training.
- Participation of a nominee on the statewide NSW Health ChemAlert Users Group (CHUG). This Group monitors adherence to the contract by the provider and addresses statewide issues related to the implementation and use of ChemAlert.
- Development of local procedures to guide the use of the System by staff, contractors and others and to ensure information on the System is maintained and up to date.
- Development of local procedures to resolve implementation issues including the referral of statewide issues to CHUG.
- Where necessary and considered suitable, identification of and resourcing of local facility or service based administrators and/or managers to enable them to carry out the various administrative tasks associated with the System and provide advice and guidance to local staff, contractors and others.
- Maintenance of appropriate levels of access control eg password protection for the stock management, risk assessment and new chemicals sections of the System.
- Planned consultation with occupational health and safety committees and staff regarding the effectiveness of the System.

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2.5.2 Staff access and use

- Providing an easily identified and accessible link to the System on the local intranet site.
- Ensuring all existing and new staff are provided with suitable and sufficient information and training allowing them to use the computer and the System appropriately, proportionate to their level of risk and responsibility.
- Ensuring the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and risk assessments components of the System are readily available to any staff member, or other persons including occupational health and safety committee members, contractors, working at each worksite who could be exposed to any chemicals. This information must be available and staff must have the ability to access this information at all times during their hours of work.
- Ensuring a local procedure is developed and implemented for accessing and providing information to emergency services in attendance at an incident on site (eg NSW Fire Brigades).
- Ensuring staff and others exposed to chemicals as part of their duties, have access to the 'search' mode of the System without need for a password.

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2.5.3 Management of information on the System

- Continued adoption of a risk management approach (consultation, identification, assessment, control, review and monitoring whenever chemical hazards are identified within the workplace, prior to the introduction of new chemicals or prior to making any changes to equipment, work environment, procedures or systems.
- Ensuring risk assessments, and/or need for a risk assessment, are reviewed whenever there is any incident or change to tasks involving chemicals.
- Development of a local process for identifying new MSDS to be added to the System.
- Development of a local process to ensure the content of the System is backed up/copied by local IT units and available to departments in the event of a local computer failure, or alternate arrangements made for the content to be available in another format in the event of local computer failure.
- Conducting a workplace chemical substances survey to identify the chemicals stored at each site. Resulting information must be entered into the Stock Holdings component of the System. A further survey should be conducted every 12 months and used to update the information held in the System.
- Ensuring incompatibility reports are monitored and controlled for the storage of dangerous goods, and compliance with dangerous goods legislation.

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2.6 Monitoring implementation

To ensure the continued effective utilisation of the System, employers should monitor on-going implementation. Performance indicators that can be used by employers include:

- % of targeted staff trained in the use of the search module
- % of managers trained in using the stock and risk modules
- % of local chemical registers logged into the System
- % of risk assessments completed
- % of local system/implementation issues that have been resolved

2.7 Reviewing System effectiveness

The effectiveness of the System as a tool for legislative compliance and its useability will be reviewed at the completion of the contract period by the NSW Health ChemAlert Users Group (CHUG). This will be done in consultation with users in Health Services, including local occupational health and safety committees.

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Director-General