

12 questions to help you prepare for this fall's chemical handling blitz

From September 19 to October 31, Ministry of Labour inspectors will fan out across the province, visiting workplaces to check records, observe, and ask questions about their chemical handling practices.

WSPS occupational hygienist Ilma Bhunnoo offers 12 sample questions that can help you assess the comprehensiveness of your chemical handling program. Ask yourself these questions with the spirit of the blitz in mind: "It's about prevention, not just compliance," says Bhunnoo.

"Everyone in Ontario's prevention system wants people to go home healthy and safe at the end of the day, just as you do. This means knowing what's on site, knowing the risks, and ensuring you have proper controls in place to protect your people and your property."

1. **What chemicals do you have on site, and how much?** Having an up-to-date list is a first step in managing risk.
2. **What are their properties** (e.g., physical state under normal conditions, boiling point, freezing point, vapour density...)? Affects how you safely handle and store.
3. **What risks do they pose** (e.g., corrosive, oxidizing, flammable...)? Each type of risk has unique handling requirements.
4. **Are the chemicals being stored in a way that minimizes risk** (e.g., in suitable containers, within the right temperature range, away from incompatible chemicals...)?
5. **Are your engineering controls functioning properly** (e.g., ventilation)? Can you add additional controls to reduce handling and exposure?
6. **If people are required to use personal protective equipment, are they wearing the right equipment?** Do they know what equipment they should be wearing? Does it fit properly?
7. **Are there ways to minimize handling** (e.g., piping a chemical into the workplace instead of handling it manually)?
8. **Do you have the right attachment for drum lifting** (e.g., an explosion-proof lifting device if needed)?
9. **Have you fully trained your people?** Do they know the hazards? Are they following the proper procedures, including personal hygiene practices? Can they locate and understand the MSDSs or SDSs and recognize the hazard symbols on labels?
10. **Are your emergency response practices adequate?** Do employees know what to do if they come in contact with hazardous chemicals? Do you have eye wash and shower stations (if appropriate)? Are proper spill containment measures in place?
11. **Do you review incidents and make changes?** Does your joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative actively inspect for chemical hazards? Do you encourage input from employees?
12. **Do you have all this documented** (e.g., inventory list, handling procedures, training records, material safety data sheets and safety data sheets)?

Knowing what's on site, understanding the risks, and ensuring you have proper controls in place will protect your people and your property.

How WSPS can help

Register for a complementary webinar on September 15: [Be ready for the MOL Chemical Handling Blitz](http://wspcs.ca/Shop/Training/Webinars/Be-ready-for-the-MOL-Chemical-Handling-Blitz.aspx)
<http://wspcs.ca/Shop/Training/Webinars/Be-ready-for-the-MOL-Chemical-Handling-Blitz.aspx>.

More information visit <http://wspcs.ca/Information-Resources/Topics/Hazardous-Materials.aspx>.

Got a question or need assistance, call WSPS Duty consultant at 1-877-494-WSPS (9777).

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