

GET TO KNOW HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

WHAT IS A HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE?

Any substance whether liquid, solid or gaseous or any organism which is injurious to human health or the environment (EMA: Cap 20:27).

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE?

The list of hazardous substances is endless, however, the following characteristics help in their identification.

- Explosive – a substance which is capable of a chemical reaction by producing a gas at such a temperature and pressure and at such speed as to cause damage to the surroundings, e.g. Nitroglycerin, TNT, Dynamite (Insert Symbol for explosive substances).
- Flammable Solids – substances or wastes liable to spontaneous combustion, e.g. potassium sulphide.
- Flammable Liquids – paints, varnishes, fuel like petrol, lacquers, etc.
- Oxidising Substances – substances yielding oxygen and may cause or contribute to the combustion of other materials, e.g. nitrates, permanganates.
- Organic peroxides – these are poisonous (acute) substances liable to either cause death or serious injury if swallowed, inhaled or by skin contact, e.g. butanone peroxides.
- Infectious Substances – these are substances containing micro-organisms known or suspected to cause disease in animals and humans. (e.g. bacteria, virus, etc)
- Corrosives – these are substances that by chemical reaction will cause damage when in contact with a living tissue or goods, e.g. acids and alkalis.
- Toxic – substances that if inhaled, ingested or penetrate the skin may involve delayed or chronic effects e.g plastic fumes, ammonia, cyanide, radio active substances like

uranium.

SUBSTANCES ON HUMANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

The variety of hazardous substances used in our everyday day lives brings with them an equally great variety of well-documented health effects. In some cases, these substances may irritate the skin or eyes, make it difficult to breath, cause headaches and nausea, or result in other types of illness.

Some hazardous substances may cause far more severe health effects, including behavioural abnormalities, cancer, genetic mutations, physiological malfunctions (e.g. reproductive impairment, kidney failure, etc), physical deformations, and birth defects.

Impacts on the environment can be just as devastating. Hazardous substances can kill living organisms in a lake or river, destroy wildlife, or otherwise limit the ability of an ecosystem to survive. Certain hazardous substances also have the potential to explode or cause a fire, threatening both wildlife and human populations.

WHY REGISTER?

Having noted the characteristics of hazardous substances, it is evident that they are injurious to animals and human health. We cannot completely scrap off these substances because they are essential for our development. Instead, registering with the Environmental Management Agency enables easy monitoring for the safety of the public and the environment. Registration can be done at EMA offices in all the districts and provinces.

Statutory Instrument 12 of 2007 (Hazardous Substances, Pesticides and Other Toxic Substances) calls for the licensing of any of the following categories;

- 1) Manufacturer, importer, seller, storage of hazardous substances;
- 2) Local transporters;
- 3) Foreign transporters;
- 4) User of hazardous substances

INFORMATION REQUIRED WHEN REGISTERING

Details of the principal suppliers of the hazardous substances; Details of the

importer/manufacturer, user and keeper; Material Safety Data Sheet.

Additional for transporters:

- Precautions to be taken for the protection of the public,
- Certificate of fitness for the horse and trailer of the truck,
- Registration book of the horse and trailer.

A NOTICE TO TRANSPORTERS OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

The transportation of hazardous substances must be done under a permit/licence (Statutory Instrument 12 of 2007). Such transportation must be confined to 0600hrs-1800hrs (Statutory Instrument 5 of 2011).

Any accidental spillage must be reported to EMA both verbally and in writing within eight hours and the transporter should ensure that the area is cleaned up to retain its usable state (Statutory Instrument 12 of 2007).

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES MONITORING AT ALL PORTS OF ENTRY

Hazardous substances are monitored at all points of entry in Zimbabwe. EMA monitors hazardous substances to check compliance with the provisions of both local and internationally binding instruments, for example the Basel Convention.

Since Zimbabwe is a signatory and has ratified internationally binding instruments that control the movement of hazardous substances and hazardous waste, it is of great importance that constant monitoring be done by qualified and competent personnel to minimise unscrupulous deals and smuggling of banned and controlled hazardous substances and waste.

The Agency assists Zimra to identify these substances when they are brought into the country or that are in transit through Zimbabwe to ensure compliance with the local and International binding instruments.

Please talk to us we are always ready to listen. Email: eep@ema.co.zw or 04 305543 / Toll free 08080028, sms/whatsapp 0779 777 094, Like our Facebook Page- Environmental Management Agency or follow us on Twitter @EMAeep.