Toxic Chemicals in the Workplace

5

5 steps to controlling potential hazards

A Manager's Guide to

Recognition

Evaluation

Control

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Preface

In recent years, questions of health and the environment have become of paramount concern to politicians and the public at large. In particular, the state of health in the workplace has, of necessity, absorbed the interest of various government departments, public institutions, labor unions, and industrial organizations. As a result, many managers now find themselves in a position in which the law, the demands of labor, and their own humanitarian principles require that they take some kind of action to improve the health of their workplace. And while that is a desirable objective, all too often some of these managers may not know what action ought to be taken. This book addresses that problem. It is concerned with the recognition, evaluation, and control of toxic chemicals in the workplace, and in particular, with the management of some common workplace chemicals.

It is true that various textbooks, reference books, and sundry documents discuss this subject matter. This book, however, takes a more practical approach to the management of toxic chemicals in the workplace than is normally found in the more academic textbooks. In particular, it avoids jargon and technical terminology, yet it is sufficiently comprehensive to provide authoritative practical knowledge without going into esoteric theory. While the book is oriented particularly to the manager who has a university or community college background, it is also applicable to those persons who have technical interests and responsibilities but may have only a modicum of specific technical knowledge. Consequently, although dealing with what has been defined as industrial toxicology and some aspects of human pathology and industrial engineering, the content is presented in a manner that's easy to understand. All technical and otherwise unfamiliar concepts are explained in nontechnical language.

I developed the idea of the book as a result of requests from various participants at seminars I conducted. These participants included production managers, human resources managers, safety and health managers,

industrial engineers, government labor inspectors, workers' compensation personnel, labor union health representatives, and professionals in occupational health and occupational hygiene, as well as students in these areas. These groups and others who need authoritative information on the topics find existing texts too academic, too research oriented, and too little directed to the practical requirements of the shop floor.

This book is divided into two sections. The first section provides the background to allow readers a knowledgeable understanding of the subject so they can recognize and evaluate whatever potential or actual problems may beset their workplace. The second section presents five simple steps readers can use to deal with the problems that have been defined.

A unique feature of the book is the inclusion of case studies, or "cautionary tales," which are fictionalized versions of real-life occurrences that are interspersed between chapters of factual content. These fictionalized tales are based on my experience and reflect some of the more interesting and often more dramatic aspects of chemical problems in the workplace.

So, go ahead. As the great 16th-century English essayist Francis Bacon once wrote: "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." I only hope the material is not too indigestible.

T. M. Fraser