

## **4 Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)**

On 31 October 1988 the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) came into effect in Canada. This national information delivery system was developed in consultation with industry, labour, and government. Its purpose is to provide employees with the information they need to protect themselves from exposure to hazardous materials while at work.

WHMIS contains three key elements to achieve the goal of a well-informed and knowledgeable workforce: labels, material safety data sheets, and employee education programs. These three elements provide the means of making essential information for the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses available to employees.

As an employer, your department is responsible for ensuring that the WHMIS requirements are met at every workplace where hazardous materials are used, handled, stored, or disposed. This responsibility includes ensuring that all hazardous materials are labelled and that the appropriate material safety data sheets are provided.

It is most important, however, that the department consult with the appropriate Occupational Safety and Health Committee and establish a formal program of