

WHMIS are the Ingredient Disclosure List (IDL) identifying substances to be listed on MSDS when present above certain concentrations. There is a Hazardous Materials Information Review Act (HMIRA) with corresponding regulations (HMIRR) to provide a mechanism whereby ingredients in a controlled product may be protected as trade secrets.

WHMIS provides information to employees as a right. If a chemical is hazardous, then it is an employer's responsibility to convey this information through labels, worker education and MSDS. WHMIS is limited to the workplace; transportation of dangerous goods (TDG) is a parallel system to protect the general public. There is no overlap with WHMIS, e.g. workers who load or unload products are covered by WHMIS and the loaded vehicle is covered by TDG while the goods are being transported.

WHMIS regulations apply to materials designated as "controlled products"; and so classification regimes have to determine whether a substance is a controlled product and, if so, which classes apply to that product. Legally, the HPA defines a controlled product in section 2 as "any product, material or substance specified by regulations ... in any of the classes listed in Schedule II" (see Table 7). Detailed criteria are found in the Controlled Product Regulations (CPR). The Canada Labour Code and the model Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) regulation use the same definitions. Suppliers must establish whether their product(s) fall into a WHMIS class; employers are not required to develop classifications under OSH but must provide labels, MSDS and worker education for controlled products using the CPR. The system is modelled on Transport Canada's