

How to Work Safely with

How to Work Safely with - Hazardous Products using the "Exclamation Mark" Pictogram

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What does this pictogram mean?



The symbol within the pictogram is an exclamation mark. This symbol indicates that hazardous products with this pictogram can cause certain health effects for example,

- skin irritation,
- eye irritation, and/or
- skin sensitization.

Hazardous products with this pictogram can be safely worked with if proper storage and handling practices are followed.

What hazard classes use the exclamation mark pictogram?

This pictogram is used by several WHMIS hazard classes within the health hazard group. Generally speaking, this pictogram is assigned to the least severe categories within a hazard class. The exception is skin sensitization where the exclamation mark pictogram is assigned to all categories within the hazard class.

The hazard classes and categories that are assigned this pictogram are:

- Acute toxicity (Oral) – Category 4
- Acute toxicity (Dermal) – Category 4
- Acute toxicity (Inhalation) – Category 4
- Skin irritation – Category 2
- Eye irritation – Categories 2 and 2A
- Skin sensitization – Categories 1, 1A and 1B
- Specific target organ toxicity – Single exposure (STOT – single) – Category 3

Note: The exclamation mark is also used for products that are Hazardous to the ozone layer – Category 1. Classification and labelling of the environmental hazard group are not required for WHMIS. However, suppliers may voluntarily choose to disclose these hazards on labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDSs).

What are the hazards of products that have the exclamation mark pictogram?

As examples:

- Acute toxicity - Oral, Dermal, Inhalation (Category 4) - Products that are known to be harmful if swallowed, if inhaled, or when they come in contact with the skin.
- Skin corrosion/irritation - Skin irritation (Category 2) - This category includes products which can cause reversible damage such as redness or inflammation after exposure.
- Serious eye damage/eye irritation - Eye irritation (Category 2 and 2A) - This category includes irritant products causing reversible effects within 21 days of exposure, or products that are severe skin irritants.

- Skin sensitizer (Category 1, 1A and 1B) - Skin sensitization is an allergic-type skin response involving symptoms such as itching, swelling, blisters, redness. Often an individual does not show any symptoms after the first exposure but with subsequent exposures, the skin reacts. Products such as latex (e.g., in gloves) and nickel are common skin sensitizers.
- Specific target organ toxicity - Single exposure (Category 3) - This category includes products that can cause irritating effects on the respiratory tract (such as coughing or throat irritation).

What signal words and hazard statements are used?

This pictogram is used for a number of very different health hazards. The WHMIS signal words and hazard statements for the hazard classes and categories assigned in this pictogram are:

Hazard Class and Category	Signal Word	Hazard Statement
Acute toxicity (Oral) – Category 4	Warning	Harmful if swallowed
Acute toxicity (Dermal) – Category 4	Warning	Harmful in contact with skin
Acute toxicity (Inhalation) – Category 4	Warning	Harmful if inhaled
Skin irritation - Category 2	Warning	Causes skin irritation
Eye irritation - Category 2	Warning	Causes serious eye irritation
Eye irritation - Category 2A	Warning	Causes eye irritation
Skin sensitization - Categories 1, 1A and 1B	Warning	May cause an allergic skin reaction
STOT – single - Category 3	Warning	May cause respiratory irritation, or may cause drowsiness or dizziness

Are there any other hazards associated with products with the exclamation mark pictogram?

In addition to the specific hazards identified by the exclamation mark pictogram, it is important to remember that a product may have other hazards, for example:

- **other health hazards** such as respiratory sensitization, germ cell mutagenicity, carcinogenicity, and specific target organ toxicity (repeated)
 - **physical hazards** such as flammability, reactivity or corrosive to metals.
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How can products with the exclamation mark pictogram be handled safely?

- Always check the SDS for information about ALL of the hazards and the necessary precautions for the product being used. Ask questions if you are not sure.
 - If it is not possible to eliminate the use of the hazardous product in your workplace, evaluate whether it is possible to [substitute](#) it with a less hazardous product.
 - Inspect all containers for damage or leaks before handling.
 - Use only outdoors or in [well-ventilated](#) areas.
 - Avoid breathing dust, fumes, gas, mist, vapours, or spray.
 - Prevent contamination of surfaces that unprotected personnel may use.
 - Keep work surfaces clean. Wipe up spills. Prevent accumulation of dust or other forms of residue.
 - Wash hands and skin thoroughly after handling.
 - Do not eat, drink or smoke when using this product.
 - Wear [eye or face protection](#), protective [gloves](#) or protective clothing, as required.
 - For skin sensitizers, contaminated work clothing should not be allowed out of the workplace.
 - Avoid repeated or prolonged skin contact with the product or with contaminated equipment or surfaces.
 - Any signs of illness should be reported immediately to the supervisor.
 - If [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) is required, the employer must ensure that workers are thoroughly trained in its selection, fit, use and maintenance. Refer to the SDS for guidance on selection.
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How can products with the exclamation mark pictogram be stored safely?

- Inspect containers and storage areas regularly for signs of leakage or damage.
- Store in the original, labelled container.

- Store in a well-ventilated place. Keep the container tightly closed.
- Keep in a cool and dry area away from direct sunlight.
- Store away from incompatible materials. Check the SDS for specific information pertaining to incompatible materials and conditions to avoid.

What should I do in case of an emergency?

- Understand and practice emergency procedures so that you know what to do if it becomes necessary.
- Ensure that an [eyewash and emergency shower](#) are readily available in the immediate work area. These devices must be tested regularly.
- Have spill control procedures and equipment ready (e.g., absorbent spill control materials, PPE etc.).
- Take off contaminated clothing and wash it before reuse.
- Be aware of the typical symptoms of exposure and appropriate first aid procedures.

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