THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR STANDARDS

RIGHT TO KNOW WORKPLACE NOTICE

The **RIGHT TO KNOW LAW, Chapter 111F** of the Massachusetts General Laws, provides rights to Public Sector employees* regarding the communication of information on toxic and hazardous substances. These rights include:

WORKPLACE NOTICE- A notice must be posted in a central location in the workplace informing employees of their rights under the law. The notice must be in the English language. In workplaces where employees' first language is other than English, the notice must be posted in that language.

TRAINING- Employers must provide an annual training program to employees who work with toxic or hazardous substances. New employees must receive training within thirty days from date of hire. The training program must be conducted by a competent person and may be in the form of verbal and/or written instruction. At a minimum, training must include an explanation of employee rights, information on how to read an MSDS, the specific hazards of the chemicals used, handled or stored in the workplace, the type of personal protective equipment to be worn, and information on labeling of hazardous substances. This training must be done with pay during the employee's normal work shift or work hours. The employer must maintain a record of this training.

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET (MSDS)- The Material Safety Data Sheet is the document that provides information on each toxic or hazardous substance used or stored in the workplace. An employee or his or her designated representative has the right to obtain and examine the MSDS for any toxic or hazardous substance to which the employee "is, has been, or may be", exposed, if the employee's request is made to the employer in writing. After four working days from the date the request is made, an employee can refuse to work with the substance under two circumstances:

1. The employer fails to: (a) furnish the employee with the MSDS and (b) furnish the employee with proof that the employer has exercised diligent effort to obtain the MSDS, either through the manufacturer or through the Commissioner of the Division of Occupational Safety, or,

2. The MSDS provided by the employer is incomplete or outdated.

LABELING- All containers in the workplace of more than five pounds or more than one gallon, containing toxic or hazardous substances, must be labeled with the chemical name of the substance. Containers of mixtures must be labeled with the chemical name of each toxic or hazardous constituent when the constituents comprise one percent or more of the mixture. Containers must also be labeled with the appropriate National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) symbol if available. Labels must be clear, prominent, in English and weather resistant. There are some exceptions to the labeling requirements for containers which are labeled in accordance with certain Federal laws.

NON-DISCRIMINATION- An employee who believes he or she has been discharged, disciplined, or in any other manner discriminated against by an employer for exercising rights granted under the Law, has one hundred eighty days following the violation of the Law or following the date on which he or she obtained knowledge that a violation occurred, to file a complaint with the Commissioner of the Division of Occupational Safety. A copy of the complaint must be sent to the employer at the same time by certified mail.

NOTE- The employee rights listed above are further defined in Chapter 111F of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Code of Massachusetts Regulations 454 CMR 21.00. Copies of the law and regulation can be obtained at the Statehouse Bookstore (617-727-2834).

All Right-to Know Inquiries should be addressed to:
Department of Labor Standards
19 Staniford Street, 2nd Floor
Boston, MA 02114
Tel.: 617-626-6975

*Private sector employees in Massachusetts are covered by a similar regulation, the Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200), enforced by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA 617-565-9860).

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