



THE SAFETY OF NEWSINKS

From time to time, the National Association of Printing Ink Manufacturers, NAPIM, has received inquiries regarding the toxicity of ink on printed newspapers. Though the meaning of “toxicity” can vary depending on the context, NAPIM thought that it would be useful to release a general statement on this question.

The United States Occupational and Health Administration (OSHA) regulate safety in the workplace. The regulation governing this is known as the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS)*. In general, newsinks are not considered hazardous under the HCS.

Because newsink is a mixture of different chemical components, its classification under the Hazard Communication Standard is usually determined by the hazard properties of the raw materials used to formulate the finished ink. Hazard information is transmitted to users of newsinks (e.g., newspaper printers, etc.) through a material safety data sheet or MSDS.

A very small number of manufactured newsinks are regulated as hazardous under the Hazard Communication Standard. These newsinks are required to have an MSDS that clearly indicates which of the components of the formulation are hazardous.

Chemical compounds are considered health hazards¹ under the Hazard Communication Standard if they meet one or more of the following regulatory criteria:

- A determination by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the National Toxicology Program, or OSHA that the chemical is a carcinogen or potential carcinogen.
- Listing in OSHA’s Subpart “Z” List
- Listing in the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) publication – Threshold Limit Values for Chemical Substances and Physical Agents in the Workplace
- Meets any of the health effects definitions (i.e. carcinogen, corrosive, highly toxic, irritant or sensitizer) provided in Appendix A of the Hazard Communication Standard

As stated above, most newsinks are not hazardous under the HCS. In addition, newsinks do not contain toxic heavy metals, such as- cadmium, arsenic, mercury, antimony, lead, selenium, or chromium, except possibly at extremely low trace levels. Newsinks are not carcinogenic under OSHA’s HCS, the National Toxicology Program (NTP), or the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organization.

The Hazard Communication Standard applies to chemical substances used in the workplace and not to consumer usage. However, in NAPIM’s opinion, consumer exposure to newsinks by handling of a printed newspaper would be less than what would occur in the workplace. That is because the minimal amount of ink contained in the newspaper (newsink makes up only about 1% of the newspaper) and because inks are absorbed into the paper substrate.

* 29 CFR 1910.1200

¹ This is a brief summary of the three-page definition and explanation of health hazard in the Hazard Communication Standard.