

Registered for Success: New SDSRP Designation may Bolster Safety, Grow Business and Build Careers

In industry, suppliers know a product is only as good as its level of compliance, right down to its safety data sheets (SDS) and labels. Success of any given product can hinge on the quality of the hazard communication around it and the proficiency of the industrial hygiene professionals creating those critical documents. Employers – producers, suppliers, and consultants, alike – are adding value to their products and services by adding Safety Data Sheet Registered Professionals (SDSRP) to their ranks.

The SDSRP designation is the first EHS Specialty Credential designed to recognize professionals with expertise in this area. Created by AIHA Registry Programs, the SDS and Label Authoring Registry is the only credential focused on assessing the skills and knowledge needed to properly author and review SDSs and labels to meet the ever-changing requirements of the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) – requirements that are often unevenly applied from country to country.

Certified Talent, Certified Quality: The Designation Clients are Looking For

Helping SDS and labeling authors to earn the SDSRP designation may require employers to make an initial investment of time and resources, but it's a savvy investment with exponential returns. Not only is the SDSRP designation attractive to clients and buyers, potentially leading to new business; the designation helps employers to hire and retain proven talent in an increasingly critical and competitive field, while also avoiding expensive non-compliance fines.

"I did work for a consulting company and they really used that they had a registered specialist to get clients," said Lori Zemen, CIH, SDSRP, and a Senior EHS Specialist at Promega in Madison, Wisconsin.

High Stakes Call for Highly Developed Authoring Skills

According to Zemen, safety data sheets - even those that have already been authored - are coming under a higher level of scrutiny. Under pressure to manage profitability, liability and compliance, customers are asking tough safety and regulatory questions. "If you don't have an answer, it could be very embarrassing for a company."

Having a registered author on the team not only results in quality sheets and labels, the widely recognized expert designation inspires trust and confidence in customers, and potentially, in the courts. "From a legal standpoint, it's only going to reinforce the validity of their sheet if they have problems down the line," explained Zemen.

There's No Substitute for Experience

“What a lot of people misconstrue about our work is that you can just push a button and get an output [or that] you can pull anybody off the street and train them up and be able to do our job, which is not the case,” said Jennifer Kirkman, the North American Hazard Communication Panel Lead and Product Regulatory Specialist for ED Dispersions at BASF Corporation in Charlotte, North Carolina. “It takes a lot of skill to read through these very long regulations and make sense of them and be able to not only take them and understand them, but be able to apply them to a compliance document like safety data sheets and labels.”

“Companies think, ‘Oh we’ve got a [SDS software] program, let’s put in what we have and print out a beautiful sheet.’ No, there’s a lot more to it than just that,” added Zemen. “They can generate an SDS from what you put in, but that’s data in and data out. If you don’t check what’s coming out – and if you can’t understand what’s coming out – the product is not good. GHS is way too complex.”

Missing the mark by failing to assess and review a computer-generated SDS can be an expensive proposition. “[If] you are found to be negligent you get fined big time and it’s per day.” warned Kirkman.

Registered for Success *and* Retention

“In this field you want to keep your people,” said Kirkman, who believes employers who help their IH’s achieve the SDSRP designation are rewarded with high-value long-term professionals. “You are promoting development in your department. You are promoting excellence through your people. You don’t have a high turnover rate. You have a company who cares about the wellbeing and professional development of their people. You are going to have those people forever.”

Registered Authors Find Firm Footing on Solid Career Path

In fact, relatively new SDSRP designation is helping to better define a promising career path for industrial hygienists or those considering a career in industrial hygiene.

Authoring safety data sheets (SDS) and labels is an increasingly difficult challenge that has companies searching for qualified SDS professionals that can achieve compliance across multiple products, customers and countries. Understanding the GHS and the unique compliance fingerprint of each country is a highly specialized skill that can save manufacturers costly non-compliance fines and delays while ensuring user safety.

A Designation in Demand

“You are always in high demand, because companies want people who already have that knowledge,” said Kirkman, “Companies are very interested in people who are go-

getters, who can take in a lot of information and interpret it and be able to make decisions, and sound decisions, legally binding decisions.”

“The Sky is the Limit”

Hazard communications and environmental health professionals who have earned the SDSRP designation claim it has helped to put a spotlight on their skills and has given their firms an edge in the industry.

“Companies are going to want somebody who shows proficiency,” said Zemen, a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) who also carries the SDSRP designation. She predicts the SDSRP will achieve the same industry-wide recognition as the now well known and higher ranking CIH designation. While many CIHs can and do author safety data sheets and labels, the specialty credential highlights professionals from across the IH spectrum who demonstrate competency in the skills and knowledge defined by the registry program’s Body of Knowledge (BoK) – a valuable designation for both employee and employer.

“When you take a role like this, if you are in a good company, then the sky is the limit as far as where you want to go with it,” said Kirkman.

Is SDSRP right for you?

Zemen recommends that those pursuing the SDSRP and a career as a registered author have a degree with a science major and says the profession is particularly suited to CIHs who may not enjoy fieldwork. “It depends on what you like to do. If you are a desk person, authoring is a good, very viable way to do it,” said Zemen.

Kirkman believes the SDSRP not only shows competency in authoring; it also shows that the professional who carries the designation is driven. “It demonstrates a professional integrity that you’ve gone through the assessment, you are confident and competent in this field,” said Kirkman.

Learn More

For more information about how to apply to the SDS Label Authoring Registry Program and to learn who qualifies to sit for the competency exam, please visit

<https://www.aiha.org/Registries/lar/Pages/DolQualify.aspx>.