

Respiratory sensitizers

List the respiratory sensitizers on site.

Explain dangers

Sensitizers are biological or chemical substances that, with repeated exposure, can cause an allergic reaction. Sensitizers are grouped as either dermal (i.e., skin irritating) or respiratory. Respiratory sensitizers are substances that can cause a reaction if they are inhaled (breathed in).

Symptoms of respiratory sensitization include:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Breathlessness
- Chest tightness

Typically, symptoms align with those of asthma. They may occur immediately after exposure or hours later. Sensitization can affect anyone who has been exposed.

A product's status as a respiratory sensitizer must be noted on its label—and its Safety Data Sheet (SDS) under Section 2: Hazard Identification. Respiratory sensitizers are among the hazards represented by the following pictogram:



Common respiratory sensitizers include:

- Isocyanates, which are often found in resins, glues, spray foam insulation, and paints
- Mineral oils (turpentine, lubricants)
- Wood dust (western red cedar)
- Rosin solder flux
- Latex

Identify controls

- Limit your exposure to the sensitizer. If possible, use alternative products that do not contain sensitizers.
- Avoid generating mists, dusts, or aerosols when working with respiratory sensitizers.
- Ensure that any tasks involving respiratory sensitizers are carried out in well-ventilated areas.
- Workers with underlying health conditions, such as lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and asthma, should inform their doctor of any sensitizing products being used on the jobsite—to determine if any additional precautions should be taken.
- Always wear properly fitted respiratory protection. Select the type of respirator that is appropriate for the work you are doing (e.g., half-face, full-face, powered air-purifying respirator, etc.), and make sure it uses the correct cartridge/filter.
 - Check with your supervisor if you are unsure what respiratory protection is needed.
- When cleaning up the site, use wet methods or a HEPA-filtered vacuum instead of dry sweeping.

Demonstrate

Review Safety Data Sheets and identify products on the jobsite that are respiratory sensitizers. Discuss the controls that are in place.

Demonstrate the correct use of respiratory protection that must be worn when using the sensitizing products.