

Ask The Expert – Chemical Manufacturing and Storage Compliance in Alberta



Expanding into chemical manufacturing or storage can create significant occupational health and safety, fire code, environmental, and product compliance obligations.

Understanding the applicable requirements before beginning operations can help employers identify facility, handling, and storage risks.

Question

Our Alberta company is considering expanding into the manufacture of an industrial cleaning product and the storage of chemicals for clients. What regulatory requirements should we consider when determining how chemical ingredients and finished products can be safely handled and stored, and whether our facility is suitable for this type of work?

Answer

These concerns are well founded. Chemical manufacturing and storage can involve several overlapping regulatory requirements, and there is generally no single standard that will apply to every product or storage arrangement.

In addition to Alberta occupational health and safety and fire

code requirements, the operation may be subject to federal requirements under the *Hazardous Products Act* and WHMIS legislation, as well as environmental and dangerous goods requirements depending on the activities involved.

Explanation

The specific requirements will depend on factors such as the chemicals involved, their hazard classifications, quantities, incompatibilities, and how they are manufactured, handled, stored, and transported. Safety Data Sheets are an important starting point for identifying hazards and storage precautions, but they may not address every facility or regulatory requirement.

Chemical storage requirements can also vary significantly depending on the substances and quantities being stored. Ventilation, fire protection, spill containment, segregation of incompatible materials, and other building or safety measures may therefore need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Given the complexity of this type of operation, employers should obtain specialized legal and technical advice before proceeding. This may include consultation with occupational health and safety, environmental, fire protection, and other qualified professionals who can assess the proposed operations and facility against the applicable requirements.