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To eliminate potential worker exposure, OSHA recommends that salon owners use products that do not contain formaldehyde, methylene glycol, formalin, methylene oxide, paraform, formic aldehyde, methanal, oxomethane, oxymethylene or Chemical Abstract Service Number 50-00-0.

If a salon owner decides to continue using a formaldehyde-containing hair smoothing product, then he or she must follow OSHA's formaldehyde standard. Important requirements of this standard include conducting air monitoring, installing ventilation where needed and training workers about formaldehyde, as well as providing protective equipment such as gloves, chemical splash goggles, face shields and chemical resistant aprons.

The material safety data sheet includes important information about what a product contains and how the ingredients can affect a worker's health. Salon owners and other employers must have a material safety data sheet for any of the products they use that contain hazardous chemicals. They must also make the sheet available to stylists and other workers.

OSHA currently has a number of ongoing investigations at salons and of importers/distributors/manufacturers relating to hair smoothing and straightening products. Some citations have been issued.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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