

# THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE STAYS GREEN AND KEEPS COMPLIANT



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Walt Sternke

Regional Environmental Engineer  
U.S. Forest Service, Southern Region

## U.S. Forest Service, Southern Region

- Manages 13.5 million acres of public lands across 13 states and PR
- Maintains a library of over 2,100 safety data sheets
- Uses the MSDSonline HQ Account for chemical management, location tracking and chemical replacement

**T**he Southern Region of the U.S. Forest Service manages 13.5 million acres of public lands across 13 states and Puerto Rico. Its over 2,300 employees must maintain vibrant ecosystems that range from rainforests to grasslands to beaches — which are visited by 28 million Americans each year.

Several years ago, as alignment with the Globally Harmonized System of hazardous chemical classification (GHS) began to draw near, the Forest Service started looking for a cloud-based solution that would help it manage its diverse SDS library over multiple locations, align fully with GHS, and help maintain its environmental and preservation mission.

Walt Sternke has been the Regional Environmental Engineer for the Forest Service Southern Region since 2000, and spearheaded the adoption of the MSDSonline HQ Account.

"We knew that being in compliance with GHS would be a big job for an organization of our size," explains Mr. Sternke. "We have 326 locations where we manage and store hazardous materials, and SDSs for more than 2,100 products. We have stuff you'd expect — like wasp killer and large amounts of WD-40 — but also chemicals for research laboratories. Our inventory is always expanding."

According to Mr. Sternke, the Forest Service first learned of the HQ Account through an online solicitation.

"Our regional safety officer received an email from *VelocityEHS*, and asked me to follow up. It turned out that one of our ranger districts in California was already an MSDSonline HQ Account customer. I called them, and they described a really positive experience with the [HQ] product. It sounded like what we needed for the GHS switchover. Before we made the final decision, I made up a fact sheet describing the system. I like fact sheets. Being an

engineer, that's how I look at things. I took the MSDSonline fact sheet I'd made to my higher-ups. Our director was quite familiar with safety data sheets, and he said 'Walt, that looks like a tremendous idea!'"

After adopting the MSDSonline HQ Account, Mr. Sternke reports that his organization enjoyed improved SDS management on several levels.

"Previously, we were using paper SDSs and copying those for all our locations. It was very time-consuming. The HQ Account made everything much easier, and also made some exciting new things possible. The most impressive was when one of our forest service research labs in Mississippi told me he had 526 new products he needed to enter. Immediately, my eyes expanded! But I quickly located the products in our system, and we were able to get the job done no problem."

"I also really feel confident with how the system positions us for any future



regulatory changes,” Mr. Sternke adds.

Mr. Sternke also notes that the MSDSonline HQ Account has been a good fit for the Southern Region Database because the system’s functionality can help with its ongoing green chemical replacement initiative.

“[The MSDSonline HQ Account] lets us record our quantities and keep better track, and it gives our forest supervisors and safety officers an excellent management tool for executing HAZMAT in the forest,” says Mr. Sternke. “We can look at the different locations and say ‘We’ve got a green product here and there. Let’s spread that over the whole forest.’ It’s definitely allowing us to cut down on our use of hazardous materials. We’re always greening up and thinking in those terms. The MSDSonline HQ Account is a big asset for this. I’ve become a real proponent!”



## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FIND A TRUSTED COMPLIANCE PARTNER

When it comes to chemical management, governmental entities are tasked to meet OSHA and EPA compliance standards just like private companies, and this must often be done while contending with the additional bureaucracy and limited resources that can accompany government work. *VelocityEHS* knows the issues that government departments face. That’s why the MSDSonline HQ Account provides tools that allow for management of HazCom compliance across large organizations and departments, while still providing customized access to end users. Our cost-effective chemical management solutions give governmental entities and agencies — both large and small — the same powerful safety tools enjoyed by Fortune 1000 companies.

## Benefits of the HQ Account

### Millions of MSDSs at Your Fingertips

24/7 access to the industry’s leading database of safety data sheets ensures your company’s library is up-to-date and in compliance.

### Simplify Compliance

Easy-to-use tools help you meet hazard communication requirements (OSHA / WHMIS / GHS), including hazard determination, right-to-know access, labeling, safe chemical handling, PPE, and more.

### Improve Chemical Management

Robust chemical management tools provide greater container-level control over the location, status and risk associated with the chemicals you use. Our free mobile Chemical Inventory Scanner app lets you scan barcode/QR code labels for in-the-field container management.

### Mobile Access

Our online accounts are mobile optimized, and our free eBinder mobile app makes it possible to access SDSs and chemical inventory information offline, when internet connectivity is limited. With these mobile capabilities, critical chemical safety information is always at your fingertips.

### Regulatory Compliant

Multiple back-up options mean your system meets OSHA, WHMIS and other regulatory requirements for electronic safety data sheet /chemical management.

### Quick ROI & Low Cost of Ownership

The HQ Account pays for itself by eliminating time-consuming, manual administrative tasks. Plus, there’s no software to install or maintain, and you get immediate access to new features.

