



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Research and  
Special Programs  
Administration**

MAY 8 1998

400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

*Ref. No. 98-0014*

Mr. Eddie Ellis  
Environmental Protection Specialist  
DRMO-Luke  
7011 N. El Mirage Rd.  
Glendale, AZ 85307-2503

Dear Mr. Ellis:

This is in response to your letter of March 10, 1998, concerning the use of abbreviations as technical names under the Hazardous Materials Regulations (49 CFR; Parts 171-185). Specifically, you asked if the abbreviation "MEK" may be used as a technical name for a hazardous material.

The abbreviation "MEK" may be used as a technical name for the chemical methyl ethyl ketone to meet the requirements of § 172.203(k). The definition in § 171.8 of "technical name" means a recognized chemical name or microbiological name currently used in scientific and technical handbooks, journals and texts. This abbreviation, however, may not be used as a proper shipping name as it does not appear specifically listed in the Hazardous Materials Table in § 172.101.

I hope this answers your question. If we can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Delmer F. Billings  
Chief, Standards Development  
Office of Hazardous Materials Standards

*Contractor  
File: 172.203(K)*



**DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY**

DEFENSE REUTILIZATION AND MARKETING SERVICE  
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DRMO Luke-UHA

10 Mar 98

**MEMORANDUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**ATTN: MIKE JOHNSON**

**SUBJECT: Request for Interpretation**

The question is:

***"Can the abbreviation "MEK" be used as the technical name of the hazardous material that must be entered in parentheses in association with the basic description of a shipping paper?" (Reference 172.203(K))***

***Example: Flammable Liquids, N.O.S. (MEK & Toluene)***

The abbreviation for Methyl Ethyl Ketone is found in 49 CFR, 172.101, Table 1, "Hazardous Substances other than Radionuclides"; Hawley's Condensed Chemical Dictionary, Eleventh Edition; 40 CFR PT 264, App IX "Ground Water Monitoring List", 40 CFR 261.33 EPA Hazardous Waste Number U159; Sax's Dangerous Properties of Industrial Materials, Eighth Edition, as a synonym (MKA 400); Chris Hazardous Chemical Data M.16465.12A, listed as a common synonym. The list is endless as every technical publication identifies MEK as a synonym of methyl ethyl ketone.

It is understood that the abbreviation cannot be used as a proper materials description and proper shipping name as listed in 172.101.

Please provide your interpretation to us by fax as soon as possible. Our fax number is (602) 856-7146 and telephone (602) 856-7144.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

**EDDIE ELLIS**  
Environmental Protection Specialist  
DRMO Luke