



What you need to know about HAZCOM

Hazardous materials continue to find their way into loads of scrap metal, posing serious risks to workers, equipment, and the environment. Items such as radioactive gauges, sealed pressurised containers, explosives and even weapons have been discovered in material destined for recycling. These items often enter the stream through theft, loss, or improper disposal and the dangers are real. Past incidents have caused severe damage to facilities, serious injuries, and even loss of life.

To tackle this challenge, the Hazardous Materials Communication (HAZCOM) Committee was established in 1999. It is a collaborative effort between recyclers, regulators, and safety experts, working to identify dangerous materials, share incident reports, and promote safer handling practices across South Africa.

The Metal Recyclers Association of South Africa (MRA) has been a key partner in this initiative, ensuring that members and the wider recycling community are equipped with the knowledge and tools to keep hazardous items out of the stream.

“HAZCOM is about keeping hazardous materials out of the recycling stream. Every recycler has a role to play in spotting risks before they cause harm by protecting people, protecting equipment, and protecting the industry’s reputation,” says **Quintin Starkey**, Committee Member of the MRA.

MRA continues to support HAZCOM by raising awareness, encouraging training, and helping recyclers access detection equipment and reporting tools. The aim is to empower both formal and informal recyclers, who are often the first to encounter hazardous materials, to recognise potential dangers, and know what steps to take.

For guidance, training opportunities, or to report hazardous materials, visit HAZCOM DGR’s official website:
<https://hazcom-dgr.co.za/>