

Industry Report

Achieving Compliance with GHS HazCom Standard

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Globally Harmonized System (GHS)

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) established the HazCom Standard (CFR 1910.1200) in 1994. The objective is to ensure chemical safety in the workplace by requiring chemicals to be labelled with safety data sheets (SDS) to convey hazard information, and train exposed workers to understand chemical hazards. But because chemical labels appeared differently based on regional requirements, handling chemicals from another region was confusing, potentially dangerous and complex for both users and international manufacturers.

To resolve the confusion caused by differing regional standards, the United Nations created the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of classification and labelling of chemicals, and OSHA has since updated its HazCom Standard to align with GHS in order to support global efforts to standardise chemical labelling. The updated HazCom standard provides a single set of harmonised criteria for classifying chemical hazards and specifies hazard communication elements for labelling and safety data sheets.



GHS has already been implemented in about 67 countries, and all distributors are required to send only chemicals with updated SDSs and labels by December 2015, with full compliance by all employers expected by June 2016. There are 3 key changes you should be aware of during the implementation of the GHS:

- New criteria for classifying hazardous chemicals that is broader than the existing standards
- Standardised format for all chemical labels with 6 elements containing certain headings and phrases to describe the various hazards
- GHS Safety Data Sheets (SDS) will have a standard 16-section format with specific information required for each section.

6 Label Elements

Each chemical label must contain 6 elements to describe the chemical hazard:

- Signal words** such as 'Danger' or 'Warning' to indicate relative severity of hazard
- Symbols** to convey health, physical and environmental hazard information using a combination of one to five Hazard Pictograms
- Product name or identifiers**

- Hazard statements** to describe the nature of hazardous products and associated risks if precautionary actions not taken.
- Precautionary statements** to describe general preventative, response, storage or disposal precautions
- Manufacturer information** such as company name, address and telephone number

16 Elements of Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

OSHA's updated HazCom requires every chemical manufacturer, distributor or importer to provide Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each hazardous chemical to communicate hazards information in a consistent format with following sections:

1. Identification of chemical and recommended uses
2. Hazards identification and the appropriate warning information
3. Composition/information of ingredients
4. First-aid measures to an individual exposed to a chemical
5. Fire-fighting measures for fighting a fire caused by the chemical
6. Accidental release measures including containment and clean-up
7. Handling practices and storage conditions
8. Exposure controls and personal protection
9. Physical and chemical properties
10. Stability and reactivity information
11. Toxicology information and health effects information
12. Ecological information (non-mandatory)
13. Disposal considerations (non-mandatory)
14. Transport information (non-mandatory)
15. Regulatory Information (non-mandatory)
16. Other Information

Compliance Checklist and Deadline

By June 2016, all companies dealing with hazardous chemicals must have a written Hazcom plan with policy and training. Every hazardous chemical being used should be listed in an inventory, along with a complete library of SDSs that are accessible to employees at all times. All hazardous storage containers, pipes and tanks should be labelled with SDSs in the GHS format, and employees must be trained to read the new label elements and SDS format.

From education to training, labelling, organisation and compliance, there is plenty of work to be done to comply with the updated HazCom standard. Should you require assistance with GHS training and labelling, make sure to consult with a GHS Hazard Communications expert, who would be able to provide you with comprehensive solutions. These include informative collateral like posters and literature, as well as tools that you can utilise to make your own GHS Hazard Communication labels if necessary.