

Globally Harmonized System (GHS)

Week Number 8 (February 19 - 25) 2017

Overview

OSHA recently revised their Hazard Communication Standard (1910.1200) to align with the international “Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals,” commonly referred to as GHS. As a result, manufacturers and distributors of hazardous chemicals and products must begin to standardize how they categorize the hazards of their products, as well as the information and format of their container labels and Safety Data Sheet.

The summary below details GHS **key terms** and related information:

- ◇ Material Safety Data Sheets will be replaced by **Safety DATA Sheets** by 6/1/2015;
- ◇ The new SD Sheets will be divided into 16 sections, with information about the product’s chemical hazards appearing in a set order that is always the same for every sheet;
- ◇ Container labels will all display mandatory information, including a **Product Identifier** that is exactly the same as that appearing on the corresponding Safety Data Sheet;
- ◇ Container labels will use standardized **Signal Words, Hazard Statements, and Precautionary Statements** to alert you to applicable dangers and necessary safeguards to follow when working with that product;
- ◇ All container labels will display one or more of nine specific **Pictograms**, which are icons inside of red squares on point that will help you quickly identify specific hazard(s) associated with the product you are using.

Even though chemical manufacturers and distributors have until 2015 to be in compliance, OSHA requires employers to train employees on the required elements of the new labeling systems and Safety DATA Sheets content by December 1, 2013.

This Safety Training Talk provides an overview of the changes you will see during the transition from HazCom — known as the “right to know” about chemical hazards—to GHS or what is called the “right to understand” the particular hazards associated with a workplace chemical.

Comparing NFPA 704 to GHS

The transition and full GHS compliance is not mandatory until 2016. Until that time, you will still see products with old style labels and MSD Sheets. It is important to note that NFPA 704 system is not currently subject to change, which poses significant areas of concern as the GHS hazard category numerical value are inverted from the NFPA format.

This means that a material having an NFPA 704 health hazard rating of 3 or 4 represents serious to severe health hazard characteristics; the most severe rating in the GHS system is 1, with 3 or 4 representing moderate to minor hazards. Problems could arise if users are not aware of the source of a particular rating and make an incorrect decision based on their understanding of the numerical value.