



Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training

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What is GHS CL

Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development initiated a long-term commitment to bringing the classification and labeling of chemicals into one unified, harmonized system that could be used by all countries. The first edition was published in 2002, and has been updated every two years since. The fifth revision is due this year, 2013.

In early 2009, the European Union (EU) began to implement the system to help assure better communication of hazards through pictograms and standardized labels for chemicals. This follows directly from REACH, that included mandate to improve risk communication. Other countries are implementing the system, as shown

Each country or region has a timeline for implementation:

http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/implementation_e.html.

The US initiated the work by updating the Hazard Communication Standard (29CFR1910.1200) in 2012. The first US milestone is for worker training, to be completed by December 1 2013. Full implementation is due in the US on June 1, 2016.

Key elements:

- Pictograms – a uniform graphic display to summarize hazards
- Labels – a format for labels that includes the pictogram and key phrases to communicate risk
- SDS – a standard order of the information required in a detailed description of chemical properties, hazards and controls. Formerly called Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), the document is a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) in the new system.

As companies comply at different times, original and new label and MSDS formats will be seen up until the full compliance deadline in 2016; this mix of information formats can be confusing for everyone.

The European Chemical Agency (ECHA) maintains the Classification and Labeling Inventory, a searchable database of pictograms, and label hazard statements , signal words for a many chemicals. See:

<http://echa.europa.eu/web/guest/information-on-chemicals/cl-inventory-database>.

Resources:

EU: <http://echa.europa.eu/about-us>

UN: http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/ghs_welcome_e.html

US: <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/index.html>