

Globally Harmonized System – FAQs

Q. What is the GHS?

A. GHS stands for Globally Harmonized System. The GHS is an international regulation that the United Nations (UN) has created for the Classification and Labeling of Hazardous Chemicals.

Q. Why is GHS being implemented?

A. Without the GHS, countries around the world are left to determine their own standards for what chemicals are hazardous – and how to properly communicate those hazards. Each country handles this differently, which creates confusion and complexity for international manufacturers. The GHS is intended to create a single, universal format for hazard communication across the globe.

Q. When will GHS be implemented in Australia?

A. There is a five year transition period until the 1st January 2017, to allow companies to fully implement the new GHS standard in their facilities.

Q. Where is GHS currently being implemented?

A. The European Union has already begun implementing many parts of the GHS regulation. Countries and regions around the world are beginning to implement it, each with their own individual timeline.

Although it is an international standard, there is not one specific international implementation schedule. The GHS is a voluntary regulation set forth by the UN; each nation's government is responsible for overseeing the regulatory changes and compliance.

Q. How will the GHS impact the Australian Dangerous Goods (ADG) Code and the Hazardous Substances - NOHSC Approved Criteria (AC)?

A. There is a close alignment of most GHS classes with the ADG Code and the AC. The ADG is used for transportation of chemicals, whereas the GHS is used for chemical labeling in the workplace.

Q. Who will be affected by the new GHS?

A. The GHS will affect chemical suppliers, manufacturers, end users, and testing laboratories. Any workplace that is currently subject to the Hazard Communication regulations will be affected.

Q. What are the biggest changes that I need to know about?

- A. There are 3 key changes that will be made during the implementation of the GHS:
- **Classification of chemicals.** The GHS will establish new criteria for classifying hazardous chemicals that is broader than the existing standards.
 - **Standardised label format.** All chemical labels will have a standardised format with the certain headings and phrases to describe the various hazards.
 - **Standardised Safety Data Sheets (SDS).** The GHS Safety Data Sheets will have a standard 16-section format with specific information required for each section.

Q. Where can I access information on hazard statements and precautionary statements for the GHS labeling?

A. All of the elements of the GHS labeling system can be found and accessed in Annex 1-3 of the UN's 3rd revised edition of the Globally Harmonized Standard for Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, found on their website.

Q. Will there be additional employee training needed for the new GHS?

A. Yes, employees will need to be trained in order to recognise and understand the new labels, pictograms and SDS information. Employees will need to learn how to interpret the pictograms and new hazard statements, and know what precautions must be taken for chemical products. The GHS is a bit more complex than the previous standards, and training will be very important to ensure that the GHS is an added safety measure in the workplace.

**Gas Cylinder**

Gases under pressure

**Health Hazard**

Carcinogens, respiratory sensitisers, reproductive toxicity, target organ toxicity, germ cell mutagens

**Exclamation Mark**

Acute toxicity, skin and eye irritation, skin sensitisers

**Flame Over Circle**

Oxidisers, organic peroxides

**Flame**

Flammable gases, liquids, and solids; self-reactives; pyrophorics; self-heating

**Environment**

Aquatic toxicity

**Skull & Crossbones**

Acute toxicity (severe)

**Corrosion**

Corrosives

**Exploding Bomb**

Explosives, self-reactives, organic peroxides

Q. What are the new GHS labeling elements?

A. The new standardized elements required for GHS labels are:

- Hazard Pictograms: There are nine pictograms in total that symbolize health, physical and environmental hazard information. The pictograms are black and white images outlined in a red diamond.
- Signal Words: Either “Danger” or “Warning” is used to convey the level of severity of the hazardous chemical.
- Hazard Statements: Assigned phrases in relation to hazard classes and hazard categories that detail the chemical’s hazards.
- Precautionary Statements: Detailed measures assigned to hazard statements given to minimize or prevent the adverse effects from physical, health, or environmental hazards.

Q. What are the benefits of the GHS?

A. The GHS will make it easier for employers, employees and the public to understand the hazards of chemicals, and take the necessary preventive and protective measures for their health and safety. It also offers a number of benefits for our government, companies and general public.

Here are the key benefits of GHS implementation:

- Enhance the protection of human health and the environment by providing an internationally comprehensible system,
- Provide a recognized framework to develop regulations for those countries without existing systems,
- Facilitate international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been identified on an international basis,
- Reduce the need for testing and evaluation against multiple classification systems.

Hot Chilli Source Pty Ltd

1800 276 872

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