



## **OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard Now Aligned with U.N. Globally Harmonized system**

*“New rules significantly change employers’ compliance approach to Hazard Communication Programs”*

OSHA recently amended its Hazard Communication Standard to conform with the United Nations global approach to providing a standard criteria for the classification and identification of chemical hazards. Called the GHS - short for “*Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals*” – the new rules, require employers to implement significant changes to the ways they are currently communicating hazard information to employees.

The GHS is an international effort to standardize hazard communication with corroborated classification of chemical hazards, product labeling, and safety data sheets. It’s a United Nations product document commonly referred to as the “Purple Book”.

According to OSHA, the revised standard is designed to make it safer for employees by providing easily understandable information for the handling and use of products containing hazardous chemicals. It also establishes a much needed standardize format for both SDSs and container labeling.

Specifically, the format and information presented in the MSDS (now called SDS – Safety Data Sheets) and on both primary and secondary container labels must be completely revamped. Manufacturers are required to prepare labels and Safety Data Sheets that more clearly identify hazard information to the downstream users, and employers must change to labels and SDSs that comply with the GHS standard, update their Hazard Communication programs, and train employees to handle the chemicals appropriately.

The major changes to the Hazard Communication Standard are, (1) Hazard classification now requires specific criteria for health and physical hazards, as well as a classification for mixtures; (2) All labels must include a harmonized signal word, pictogram, and hazard statement for each hazard class and category, and “precautionary” statements must be provided; (3) All SDSs must use a specified 16-section format; and (4) Employees must be trained on the new label elements and SDS format by December 1, 2013 (June 1, 2014 in Washington).

The program implementation schedule will be phased in over the next three and a half years. Effective completion dates of the several requirements are:

December 1, 2013 – Employers must train employees on SDS format and new label elements.

\*Washington state deadline is June 1, 2014.

June 1, 2015 – Manufacturers and importers must comply with new SDS and label requirements.

December 1, 2015 – Distributors are not to ship products unless the container has GHS label.

June 1, 2016 – (a) Employers must update labels on “workplace” containers; (b) train employees on newly identified hazards and, (3) update Hazard Communications Program.

\* *Implementation dates relating to employer-required activities may be different in states with State Plan equivalents to federal OSHA.*

**For additional information go to [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)**