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## Finally! OSHA Revises Hazard Communication Standard

OSHA recently announced its final rule revising the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS). Originally promulgated in 1983, the HCS is based on workers' "right to know" about the hazards they face in the workplace. The intent of the revised HCS is to clarify the information provided to workers, based on an employee's "right to understand" workplace hazards.

The revised HCS reflects the United Nations' Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS), which was negotiated by a variety of stakeholders around the world. Because American workers may use chemicals made abroad (and workers abroad may use US-produced chemicals), a consistent labeling standard around the world will enhance worker safety by making labels easier for everyone to understand.

The revised HCS makes three primary changes from the current standard:

### **Hazard Classification**

Chemical producers and importers still bear the responsibility for classifying hazards presented by chemicals. The revised HCS provides detailed criteria for classifying the type and severity of hazard presented. The intent of the new information on hazard class and severity category is to efficiently provide guidance on the appropriate response to exposure.

### **Chemical Labels**

The new rule requires a standardized label design that includes the use of pictograms, shown on the [Hazard Communication Standard Pictogram Quick Card](#), which depict the type of hazard presented. Labels are also required to include a "signal word" ("danger" for more severe hazards and "warning" for less severe hazards) and a precautionary statement suggesting safety measures. A sample [Hazard Communication Standard Label](#) is available on the OSHA website.

## Safety Data Sheets

OSHA will now require a standardized 16-section format for Safety Data Sheets (SDSs), formerly known as Material Safety Data Sheets or MSDSs. This is expected to enhance ease of use, especially in an emergency, by ensuring that key information (for example, spill response procedures) can be quickly found within the document. The [new SDS format](#) is shown on the OSHA website.

## EFFECTIVE DATE

Chemical producers and importers are required to implement the revised label and SDS formats in 2015. As the GHSC labels are phased in around the world, American workers may start to receive labels and SDSs in the new format before the labeling rule goes into effect in the US. Therefore, to ensure that employees understand the new labels, OSHA requires US employers to train employees on the new label elements and SDS format by December 1, 2013.

Click to view OSHA's press release, "[US Department of Labor's OSHA revises Hazard Communication Standard: Regulation protects workers from dangerous chemicals, helps American businesses compete worldwide.](#)"

Click here to see the Department of Labor's [final rule](#).

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## CONTACT US

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