



Workplace Health And Safety

Worker Safety First

CPCA ISSUE BACKGROUNDER

Global Context

In the 1990s, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe sought to design a universal chemical classification system for the entire world called the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) in the workplace that would:

- enhance the protection of human health and the environment by providing an internationally comprehensible system for hazard communication
- provide a recognized framework for those countries without an existing system
- reduce the need for testing and evaluation of chemicals
- facilitate international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been properly assessed and identified on an international basis

GHS would be harmonized across the globe and in Canada it would replace the existing program for chemicals, the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS 1988 and WHMIS 2015).

GHS defines and classifies the hazards of chemical products, and communicates health and safety information on labels and safety data sheets. The goal is to have the same set of rules for classifying hazards, and the same format and content for labels and safety data sheets (SDS) used around the world. GHS covers all hazardous chemicals and may be adapted to cover chemicals in the workplace, transport, consumer products, pesticides and pharmaceuticals. The target audiences for GHS include workers, transport workers, emergency responders and consumers. Two major elements in GHS are:

- Classification of the hazards of chemicals according to the GHS rules. GHS provides guidance on classifying pure chemicals and mixtures according to its criteria or rules.

- Communication of the hazards and precautionary information using Safety Data Sheets and labels as needed.

For labels for the GHS, certain information will appear on the label itself. For example, the chemical identity may be required. Standardized hazard statements, signal words and symbols will also appear on the label according to the classification of that chemical or mixture. Precautionary statements may also be required, if adopted by a country's regulatory authority.

For Safety Data Sheets (SDS) the GHS SDS has 16 sections in a set order, and minimum information is prescribed for those.

GHS in Canada

The Hazardous Products Regulations were published in the Canada Gazette, Part II on February 11, 2015. Both the amended Hazardous Products Act and the new regulations are currently in force followed by a 3-year transition period for full implementation by December 2018. Suppliers could begin using and following the new requirements for labels and SDSs for hazardous products sold, distributed, or imported into Canada. Canada's occupational health and safety WHMIS regulations are also being updated.

The WHMIS program

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System is a comprehensive system for providing health and safety information on hazardous products intended for use, handling, or storage in Canadian workplaces. A WHMIS program ensures that the information on hazardous products is effectively communicated to workers. Effective communication of information means that workers understand the WHMIS system, know the hazards of the products they work with, know and apply the safe work procedures specific to their jobs and tasks, and know how to respond in an emergency.



How GHS will change WHMIS

Overall, the current roles and responsibilities for suppliers, employers and workers have not changed in WHMIS 2015. Suppliers, importers and producer duties continue to include:

- Classifying hazardous products
- Preparing labels and SDSs
- Providing these elements to customers

Employers must continue to:

- Educate and train workers on the hazards and safe use of products
- Ensure that hazardous materials are properly labelled
- Prepare workplace labels and SDSs as necessary
- Provide access for workers to up-to-date SDSs
- Ensure appropriate control measures are in place to protect the health and safety of workers

Workers must still:

- Participate in WHMIS and chemical safety training programs
- Take necessary steps to protect themselves and their coworkers
- Participate in identifying and controlling hazards



CPCA's Work on GHS/WHMIS

CPCA is a member of Health Canada's Current Issues Committee that addresses issues of concern for workplace health and safety. The CIC is comprised of representatives from industry, labour, and provincial and territorial government officials.

CPCA worked diligently to help prepare members for the transition to WHMIS 2015 including software and hazard database information, training opportunities, information on low compliance rates for SDSs that are signaled by Health Canada, and upcoming inspector blitzes. CPCA continues to compile and publish answers received from the government's WHMIS 2015 Desk. CPCA and other industry CIC members were successful in amending the Hazardous Products Regulations to introduce more flexibility to the protection of Confidential Business Information (CBI), without having to go through the burdensome and costly HMIRA (Hazardous Materials Information Review Act) CBI claims process.

CPCA is also part of a CIC working group formed to discuss exclusion of consumer products from the Hazardous Products Regulations based on labour groups claim that there is widespread inability of employers to obtain compliant SDSs for consumer products purchased and used in Canadian workplaces, thus prolonging unsafe worker exposure. Industry members have repeatedly requested evidence that would identify any such risks posed by the use of consumer products in the workplace, but no such evidence has been provided as yet. CPCA, and all other industry organizations, has actively argued for the maintenance of the exemption related to consumer products.

For more information on WHMIS 2015 please go to:
https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/program.html



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About CPCA

Since 1913, the Canadian Paint and Coatings Association (CPCA) has represented Canada's major paint and coatings manufacturers, and their industry suppliers and distributors in three primary product categories: architectural paints, industrial products and automotive coatings. In Canada, CPCA members have more than 261 paint manufacturing establishments, own more than 3,000 retail outlets, supply products to another 5,000 retail stores and more than 7,500 auto body shops. This represents annual retail sales of more than \$12.3 billion, employing directly and indirectly 86,300 employees.

