

Regulatory Compliance

The Evolution of the Hazard Communication Standard

Don Sears | May 24, 2018

Safety from chemicals in the workplace is much more than simple warning labels—though they are an essential aspect of the helping inform workers of dangers that are present. Learn how the hazard communication standard moved from the “right to know” law—to a more uniform and formalized communication process that is visual, written and very prescriptive. But most of all, there is now clarity.

Laws evolve. Regulations change.

One of the most important and essential laws that has evolved is the hazard communication standard from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—which is now known as **29 CFR 1910.1200 (g)**. It was revised in 2012 to become a more consistent and fully detailed standard that could be used the across the globe regardless of destination. To meet that need, OSHA adopted the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling or “GHS” for short.

More than 32 million workers—or just over 20 percent of the U.S. workforce—are exposed to dangerous chemicals at work with more than 650,000 chemicals present across 3 million facilities. Despite training, nearly 3 million nonfatal injuries occurred from chemicals in 2012 alone. Given the ***dangers in handling*** or being in proximity to toxic or flammable chemicals, the standard on the books was not enough.

The original law on hazard communication went in to effect in late 1983—but that did not mean that the information chemical manufacturers provided across the world was all the same—or more importantly, was clearly understood by workers handling dangerous substances. For companies and manufacturing workers alike, confusion reigned. Country-to-country standards were different—and what manufacturers were required to specifically inform workers in writing and in visual form as not uniform or did not fully detail all the hazards present—hence the need for a more reliable and consistent standard.

To learn more about the evolution of the hazard communication standard and what changed, check out our detailed infographic.

The Evolution of The Hazard Communication Standard

Until fairly recently, the hazard communication standard was messy and confusing for companies and workers. By refocusing the standard globally, OSHA helped the information about chemicals become more uniform and easy to understand. See what changed—and why it needed to happen.

1 Chemical Manufacturing Is a Big Industry

Global Revenue 2002: **\$1.78 Trillion** Global Revenue 2016: **\$5.2 Trillion**

2 Why Does a Hazard Communication Standard Exist?

OSHA STANDARD: 29 CFR 1910.1200 / EFFECTIVE DATE: NOVEMBER 25, 1983

Born out of the concept of the "Right to Know," HCS exists to inform workers of toxic dangers present on the job.

How HCS Has Evolved

Chemical manufacturers perform business globally and must adhere to local laws. Often, there are multiple regulators in the same country. In the US alone, chemical regulations exist for the:

- EPA**
(Environmental Protection Agency)
- CPSC**
(Consumer Protection Safety Commission)
- DOT**
(Department of Transportation)
- OSHA**
(Occupational Safety and Health Administration)

Problem: Differences in hazard symbols and labels are not clearly understood by workers in every country. Safety info is incomplete or inconsistent.

Challenge: Making country or region-specific labels, symbols and data sheets for the same hazards.



Solution: Use the United Nations' Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling or GHS.

Outcome: OSHA updates 29 CFR 1910.1200 to adhere to GHS formal classifications, safety data sheets and labels.

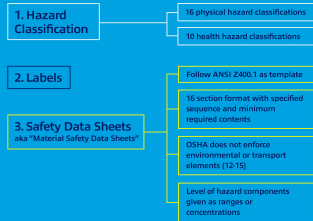
Effective Legal Date: March, 25 2012 / Effective Label Training Date: December 1, 2013 / OSHA Enforcement: June 1, 2016

Expected Impact:

- 43 Million Workers**
- 5 Million Workplaces**

- Reduce 500+ injuries / year
- Prevent 43 fatalities / year
- Save \$16M to \$32M with uniform info and labels

3 Elements of OSHA GHS Compliance



4 GHS Label Requirements: A Major Change

Before GHS: Method to convey hazards on a label was preparer's choice.

With GHS: Hazard has to be classified, then follow the standard for class and category. Labels must include:

- Product identifier
- Signal word
- Hazard statement(s)
- Pictogram(s)
- Precautionary statement(s)
- Name, address, and telephone number of responsible party

5 HCS Pictograms



SOURCES: Statista "Total Revenue of the Global Chemical Industry"; www.statista.com; Law Office of Adelle L. Abrams PC, "Global Harmonization System Impact On OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard"; www.nanopdf.com; OSHA FAQ "Modification of the HCS to Conform with the United Nations' GHS"; www.osha.gov

Spotlight on Compliance

Here is a collection of the best articles on compliance with OSHA, chemical safety, safety signs and other important areas of safety:

Best Practices for Managing Chemical Safety

OSHA Regulations Adopt ANSI Z535

OSHA Definition of Safety Signs

Summer Safety: Beat Workplace Heat Stress With Cool Air, Ventilation and HLVS Fans

How OSHA Violations Add Up: What to Watch Out for In 2018

7 Key Factors for Complying With OSHA's Hearing Conservation Standard

Exploring the Safety Dangers of Metalworking Fluids

5 Must-Know Tips for Fall Protection Training

Are your hazard communication safety practices up to date? Share your comments.

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