



Updates to OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard



In May 2012, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) updated its [Hazard Communication Standard](#) (HazCom) to bring it in line with the Global Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS) developed by the United Nations. This new system is being implemented throughout the world by countries including Canada, the European Union, China, Australia and Japan. Whereas the original HazCom standard was called the *Right-to-Know* standard, the updated version is being called the *Right-to-Understand* standard.

In order to bring the HazCom standard in line with the GHS, manufacturers of chemicals are tasked with new requirements. They first must conduct a Hazard Classification of their products, utilizing specific criteria that are unified over all nations to help ensure that classifications of hazardous effects are consistent across manufacturers. In addition, there is a new labeling format for hazardous chemicals and new Safety Data Sheets (SDS) that must be utilized.

There are five components that will be required on manufacturers' [labels](#), including the supplier information, pictograms (visual representations of the hazards of the product), signal words (danger or warning), hazard statements and precautionary measures. There are 9 [pictograms](#) that will be in use for labeling, representing both health hazards and physical hazards. All are diamond shaped, with black symbols on a white background surrounded by a red border.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) will be replaced by [Safety Data Sheets](#) (SDS). The MSDS already produced by manufacturers are required to have standard information, as identified by OSHA, about the hazardous chemical, but there is no uniformity in the look or organization of each MSDS. The SDS, on the other hand, has 16 distinct sections, all organized in the same way, providing uniformity in the order of the sections and the information provided under each heading. Up until now different manufacturers had vastly different looking MSDS, all SDS will now be organized the same way across manufacturers.

Manufacturers have until June 1, 2015 to switch to the new labels and SDS format. **Employers, however, have only until *December 1, 2013* to conduct training on the new labels and SDS format!** That is to ensure that employees will have an understanding of the new labels and SDS as they become available. Make sure you start replacing the existing MSDS with the new SDS as they arrive with new product shipments. In addition, by June 1, 2016, the University's Hazard Communication Program must be updated to reflect the new changes to the HazCom Standard.

The [Hazard Communication training program](#) offered by EHS in classroom and online formats incorporates the new HazCom information. Make sure to register yourself or your employees for training in order to meet the compliance date of December 1, 2013.

Questions about the Hazard Communication Standard and requirements can be directed to [Valerie Brangan](#).