

TOOLBOX TALK #5

HAZCOM/GHS

Question: What steps do I need to take to be compliant under the new hazard communication standard?

Answer: The recent update to OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard changes the requirements for chemical labeling and mandatory employee training. The new Globally Harmonized System creates a universal standard to help keep workers safe and informed about chemical hazards. Because Hazcom is already one of the most frequently violated OSHA standards, it's essential to know exactly what GHS is and how it affects your business.

With the June 1, 2016, full compliance deadline creeping closer, now is the time for companies affected by OSHA's Hazcom standard update to be proactive. Compliance often is a struggle when employers lack written programs, fail to include enough information in written programs or don't provide proper training.

Learning about GHS

Throughout the process of aligning with the new GHS standard, make sure your written Hazcom program is updated and reflects any internal and external changes. Learn the ins and outs of GHS by familiarizing yourself with the new label format, the 16 elements of a Safety Data Sheet, and the GHS pictogram symbols and their various hazard classes.

If you have not done so already, separate SDS and the previous Material Safety Data Sheet binders and sheets. This will help you stay organized when you re-label chemicals with SDS information and determine which sheets have not been received. As new materials are used, be sure to note any hazards identified on SDS and potential personal protective equipment changes.

December 1, 2013, was the deadline for training on the new SDS elements and format, label elements, pictograms, and overall changes to the Hazcom Standard. With this date behind us, it is important to keep employees educated with re-training on pictograms, labels and SDSs. It also is useful to provide visuals – such as posters, signs and wallet cards – to keep the GHS update current in the minds of workers.

