

Benefits of Adoption

- The GHS will enhance protection of humans and the environment around the world.
- International trade in chemicals, whose hazards have been properly assessed and identified on an international basis, will be facilitated.
- Countries will have an internationally maintained system, without needing to develop from the beginning the infrastructure necessary to maintain such a system themselves.
- The GHS provides the informational framework upon which countries can base programs for the sound management of chemicals throughout their population.
- The GHS will avoid duplication of testing and evaluation of chemicals to determine their hazardous effects.

Current Activities

For more information about the GHS and the process of its development, please see:

www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/ghs.html

www.ilo.org/safework

www.oecd.org/ehs

The completed technical work is now available on the UN GHS Subcommittee's web site (see documents 20-28):

www.unece.org/trans/main/dgdb/dgsubc4/c42001.html

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in cooperation with the ILO and the OECD, has initiated a Pilot Programme to assist a number of countries to implement the system and conduct related activities. Under this Programme, guidance designed to assist other countries is being developed and tested. For further information: www.unitar.org/cwm/homepage/b/hc/index.htm

Conclusion

The GHS provides a valuable instrument to greatly advance worldwide management of chemical hazards. The benefits of adopting the system apply to all countries.

THE GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM FOR CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS - THE GHS

A Worldwide Approach to an Informational Framework for the Sound Management of Chemicals



What Is The Globally Harmonized System (GHS)?

- The GHS is a consistent and coherent approach to identifying the hazards of chemicals, and providing information on these hazards and associated protective measures to users or those who may be exposed. The system is structured so that appropriate elements for classification and communication, which consider the target population, can be selected. Those who then use chemicals can take the proper steps to protect themselves and the environment.
- Target populations include employers, workers, including those involved in transport, consumers, and emergency responders. Others who provide services to these people will also find the information useful (e.g., doctors, nurses, safety engineers and occupational hygienists).
- The GHS includes harmonized criteria for the definition of physical hazards (such as flammability), health hazards (such as carcinogenicity) and environmental hazards. These internationally-developed criteria are used to evaluate the hazards of both substances and mixtures.
- The GHS addresses how labels and safety data sheets should be used to convey information about these hazards, and how

to protect people from these effects. It also provides a basis for safety training and health promotion.

How Was It Developed?

- Many countries have adopted regulatory provisions to provide information about chemicals. There are many different systems around the world, both in terms of scope of coverage and how hazard information is to be conveyed.
- The result is uneven protection from one country to another. In addition, it costs a great deal to label according to the different national systems.
- Following up on an International Labour Organization (ILO) initiative, in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted an international mandate to develop a globally harmonized hazard classification and compatible labeling system, including material safety data sheets and easily understandable symbols.
- For nearly 10 years, the development of the GHS has been a joint effort of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), ILO, UN Committee of Experts for the Transport of Dangerous Goods and numerous national experts from the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia. The initial technical work on

the GHS is now complete and it has been sent to a new United Nations Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (UNSEGHS) to adopt and implement.

What Chemicals Are Covered By The GHS?

- The GHS covers all hazardous chemical substances, dilute solutions and mixtures.
- Pharmaceuticals, food additives, cosmetics and pesticide residues in food will not be covered at the point of intentional intake but will be covered where workers may be exposed and in transport.

