

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)

Purpose, scope and application

(The contents of this presentation have been updated according to the fourth revised edition of the GHS, published in 2011)

Purpose of the GHS (1)

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

Purpose of the GHS (2): Agreed principles (1)

- (a) **Level of protection offered should not be reduced** as a result of harmonizing classification and labelling systems
- (b) **Hazard classification done on the basis of intrinsic properties** of chemicals
- (c) **Harmonization:** common and coherent basis for chemical classification and communication
- (d) **Scope of harmonization:** hazard classification criteria+hazard communication tools
- (e) **Transitional measures** for the implementation of the new system should be included
- (f) **Involvement** of international organizations should be ensured

Purpose of the GHS (3): Agreed principles (2)

- (g) Comprehension of chemical hazard information should be ensured
- (h) Validated data under existing systems should be accepted for reclassification of chemicals according to the new system
- (i) New system may require adaptation of existing methods for testing of chemicals
- (j) In relation to chemical hazard communication, the safety and health of workers, consumers and the public in general, as well as the protection of the environment, should be ensured while protecting confidential business information, as prescribed by the competent authorities

The GHS (1)

Provides:

- Harmonized criteria for classification of substances and mixtures
 - according to their physical, health and environmental hazards
- Harmonized hazard communication elements
 - including requirements for labels and safety data sheets

Covers all hazardous chemicals

The mode of application of its hazard communication elements may vary by product category or stage in the life cycle

Target audiences:

- Consumers
- Workers, including transport workers
- Emergency responders

The GHS (2)

- GHS classification is based on currently available data
- **Does not require retesting of chemicals:** Data obtained from tests conducted according to internationally recognized scientific principles can be used for purposes of hazard determination for health and environmental hazards.
- GHS criteria for determining health and environmental hazards are **test method neutral**
- GHS explicitly **acknowledges the existence and use of all appropriate and relevant information** concerning hazards or the likelihood of harmful effects: in addition to animal data and valid in vitro testing, human experience, epidemiological data, and clinical testing should be considered.

The GHS (3)

- Is not intended to harmonize risk assessment procedures or risk management decisions (such as establishment of a permissible exposure limit for employee exposure), which generally require some risk assessment in addition to hazard classification
- Chemical inventory requirements in various countries are not related to the GHS

Application of the GHS (1)

- Will allow the hazard communication elements of the existing systems to converge
- Competent authorities will decide how to apply the various elements of the GHS based on the needs of the competent authority and the target audiences.
- The harmonized elements of the GHS may be seen as a collection of building blocks from which to form a regulatory approach

“Building block approach”

Application of the GHS (2)

Countries are free to determine which of the building blocks will be applied in different parts of their systems.

However...

... where a system covers something that is in the GHS, and implements the GHS, that **coverage should be consistent**.

For example, if a system covers the carcinogenicity of a chemical, it should follow the harmonized classification scheme and the harmonized label elements.

For further **guidance on the interpretation of the building block approach** see 1.1.3.1.5.4.

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End of purpose, scope and application

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