

OSHA Issues GHS/HazCom Harmonization Rule

April 2012

On March 26, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a final rule updating its Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) to align it with the United Nations' Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS), also known as the "Purple Book." 77 Fed. Reg. 17574.

The new rule will require chemical manufacturers and importers to reclassify the health and physical hazards of their chemicals based on new standards and update labels accordingly, including new pictograms (see page 4), signal words (*e.g.*, "DANGER"), hazard statements (*e.g.*, "Highly flammable liquid and vapor"), and precautionary statements (*e.g.*, "Only use non-sparking tools"). Safety Data Sheets (SDS), previously called MSDS, must also be revised and will have a new, specified 16-section format. Employers subject to the HCS will be required to train workers to facilitate understanding of the new labels and safety data sheets.

The rule's provisions take effect across a fairly generous phase-in period. Employers must train workers on the new label elements and SDS format by December 1, 2013. Chemical manufacturers, importers, distributor, and employers must comply with all modified provisions by June 1, 2015, but distributors may ship products labeled by manufacturers under the old system until December 1, 2015. Employers also have until June 1, 2016, to update workplace labeling and hazard communication programs and provide additional worker training for newly identified physical and health hazards. Before these requirements take effect, manufacturers, importers, distributors, and employers may comply with either the old or new HCS standard.

The required pictograms, as shown on OSHA's website are available [here](#).