Hazardous Communication Standard: Occupational Safety and Health Administration Finalizes Revisions/Update



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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") published a final rule in the May 20th Federal Register updating and revising its Hazard Communication Standard ("HCS"). See 89 Fed. Reg. 44144.

OSHA states that the purpose of the final rule is to modify the HCS to:

- Maintain conformity with the United Nations' Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals ("GHS")
- Align certain provisions with Canada and other United States agencies
- Address issues that have arisen since implementation of the 2012 HCS

The HCS is found at 29 C.F.R. 1910.1200. It was originally promulgated in 1983.

The HCS requires that employers communicate with employees about hazardous chemicals to which they may be exposed at work.

The information provided by the HCS is typically divided into five main areas:

- List of hazardous chemicals used within the facility
- Creation of a written Hazardous Communication Program
- Proper labelling of dangerous chemicals
- Providing Material Safety Data Sheets
- Providing comprehensive staff training

The HCS provides certain information about the identities and hazards of the chemicals by requiring:

- Chemical manufacturers and importers must evaluate the hazards of the chemicals they produce or import, prepare labels and Material Safety Data Sheets to convey the hazard information to their downstream customers
- Employers with hazardous chemicals in their workplace must provide labels and Material Safety Data Sheets for exposed workers, and train them to handle their chemicals appropriately

The Material Safety Data Sheets provide information about the chemicals, which include:

- Properties and risks
- Correct handling and storage practices

- What protective measures employees should use to remain safe when handling or interacting with chemicals

OSHA states that the updated standard will:

- Require labels on small packaging to be more comprehensive and readable
- Help ensure trade secrets no longer prevent workers and first responders from receiving critical hazard information on Material Safety Data Sheets

OSHA also cites benefits such as:

- Clear hazard classification process
- Updated physical hazard classes
- Updated precautionary statements on how to safely handle, store, and dispose of hazardous chemicals

A link to the 318-page preamble to the final rule can be downloaded here.