




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

Purpose, scope and application



Purpose of the GHS

- 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

Agreed principles for its development

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

Provides

- Harmonized criteria for classification of substances and mixtures (based on their physical, health and environmental hazards). The classification criteria for health and environmental hazards are test method neutral
- 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 Globally Harmonized System (GHS)

Does not require retesting of chemicals

- Data obtained from tests conducted according to internationally recognized scientific principles can be used for classification for health and environmental hazards
- 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

Not intended to harmonize risk assessment procedures or risk management decisions (e.g.: establishment of a permissible exposure limit for employee exposure), which generally require some risk assessment in addition to hazard classification

Building block approach

The harmonized elements of the GHS may be seen as a collection of building blocks from which to form a regulatory approach

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

Competent authorities are free to determine which of the building blocks will be applied in different parts of their regulatory systems (e.g.: workplace, consumer chemicals...)

However, where a regulatory system covers a hazard class that is in the GHS, and implements the GHS, that coverage should be consistent with the GHS. For example, if a system covers the carcinogenicity of a chemical, it should follow the harmonized classification scheme and the harmonized label elements.

For guidance on the interpretation of the building block approach see [chapter 1.1, paragraph 1.1.3.1.5.4 of the GHS](#)



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End of purpose, scope and application