

Hazard Communication for Construction: Written Program

The purpose of the **Hazard Communication (HazCom) Standard** is to ensure that employers and employees know about work hazards and how to protect themselves to reduce the incidence of illnesses and injuries due to hazardous chemicals.

The Standard covers chemical manufacturers, importers, distributors, employers and employees exposed to chemical hazards. It applies to general industry, shipyards, marine terminals, longshoring, construction and healthcare.

The purpose of the **Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS)** is to reduce confusion and, therefore, worker injury and illness. It standardizes an international approach to the HazCom Standard. It also sets specific criteria for hazard warning labels and a 16-section format for Safety Data Sheets (SDSs).

Types of Hazards

- **Physical hazards** can cause serious accidents and injuries (ex: flammable/explosive)
- **Health hazards** can affect a person's short-term or long-term health (ex: toxic)

Responsibilities

Chemical **manufacturers** must:

- Evaluate the hazards of the chemicals they manufacture
- Label products according to the HazCom Standard and provide a safety data sheet (SDS) with each chemical they ship

Importers and distributors of chemicals must ensure proper labeling and transmit an SDS with each chemical they ship.

Companies must:

- Identify and list hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Obtain safety data sheets and labels for each hazardous chemical, if not provided by the manufacturer, importer or distributor
- Implement a written HazCom program, including:
 - Hazard classification
 - SDSs and labels
 - The written program
 - Training

Hazardous Chemical Inventory

Companies must:

- Identify and list all hazardous chemicals to which workers could potentially be exposed
- Consider chemicals in all forms (liquids, solids, gases, vapors, fumes and mists)
- Identify chemicals in containers (including pipes) and consider chemicals generated in work operations, such as welding fumes, dusts and exhaust fumes

Written Program

The written program must include all of the following:

- The hazardous chemicals present at the jobsite
- Who is responsible for the various aspects of the program
- Where written materials will be made available
- How information will be exchanged at multi-employer jobsites
 - How site owner, general contractor, and subcontractors coming onsite will communicate
- How the jobsite meets the requirements for:
 - Container labels and other forms of warning
 - Providing access to SDSs
 - Providing information and training
- How employees will be informed of non-routine task hazards
- The ways in which pipes and piping systems are marked

Training

Companies must train workers about the hazard communication program:

- Before potential exposure or work with a hazardous chemical
- Whenever the hazard changes
- Whenever a new hazard is introduced into their work area

Expect to learn about:

- Where hazardous chemicals are present
- Where to find the written program, hazardous chemical inventory and SDSs
- The physical and health hazards of chemicals
- How you can protect yourself from chemical hazards
- How to detect the presence or release of a hazardous chemical