

GHS Frequently Asked Questions

Q What is GHS?

A GHS stands for the “Globally Harmonized System of Classification & Labeling”. This is an international approach to hazard communication that was developed by the United Nations (UN). It is a system that defines and classifies the hazards of chemicals and communicates health, safety and environmental information on labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDSs). These labels and SDSs need to contain specified information.

Q What is the purpose of GHS?

A To provide harmonized criteria for classification/ hazard communication measures for different target audiences, including consumers, workers and emergency responders thereby improving hazard communication which should lead to reduced injuries and illnesses.

Q I’ve heard that GHS is not global and not harmonized. Is that true?

A Yes, in that GHS is not being applied identically in all countries. GHS uses a building block approach and various governments have chosen to introduce some blocks of GHS and not others. One example is that the US and Canada have chosen not to introduce the environmental building block. That said, GHS is being introduced by many countries around the world and although not perfect, represents the most international approach to the classification of chemicals there has ever been.

Q What is the regulatory timescale in the US for introducing GHS?

A June 1, 2015 is the date that manufacturers in the US must comply with the new OSHA HAZCOM standard. Distributors have until December 1, 2015.

Q When is Afton introducing GHS in the US?

A Afton plans to start issuing US GHS SDS in December 2014.

Q When is Afton introducing GHS in other countries of the world?

A GHS classifications already appear on most of Afton’s SDS which are in a historical 16 section “global format”. Afton will issue further SDS and hazcom labels as necessary ahead of the various national regulatory deadlines.

Q Will Afton issue one Safety Data Sheet to cover both the US and Canada?

A Yes, this is Afton’s intention. Unlike the US, GHS has not yet completed the legislative process in Canada and so it may be that Afton issues US compliant GHS SDS first and adds additional Canadian GHS information at a later stage.

Q Are Afton’s products changing?

A No, the move to GHS SDS and labels does not cause Afton’s products to change. There is no change to the chemistry, formulations, hazards, or performance of our products. The change is to how OSHA and other regulatory authorities require us to classify and label our products and how we communicate the hazards.

Q Does Afton have an email address for GHS inquiries about Afton’s products?

A Yes it is GHS@aftonchemical.com

Q Where can I find out more about OSHA’s GHS requirements?

A Please see www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/index.html

The regulated timeframe is as follows:

Effective Compliance Deadline	Requirement(s)	Who
25 May 2012	Official start of the transition period. May comply with either 29 CFR 1910.1200 (the final standard) or the current standard or both.	Chemical manufacturers, importers, distributors and employers
1 December 2013	Train employees on the new label elements and SDS format	Employers
1 June 2015	Compliance with all modified provisions of the final rule, except Distributors.	Chemical manufacturers, importers, distributors and employers
1 December 2015	Distributor shall not ship containers labeled by the chemical manufacturer or importer unless it is a GHS label.	Chemical manufacturers, importers, distributors and employers
1 June 2016	Update alternative workplace labeling and hazard communication program as necessary, and provide additional employee training for newly identified physical or health hazards.	Employers

Q What are the GHS pictograms and what do they mean?

A Please see below:

