

# Canada's Adoption of GHS Will Replace WHMIS



The UN's Globally Harmonized System (GHS), a relatively new international system for classifying and labelling chemicals, was created because although many countries have systems for classifying and labelling chemicals that are similar, there are enough significant differences to create trade barriers, impede compliance, cause confusion and endanger workers.

Thus, the purpose of the GHS is to ensure that companies, workers and other end users across the world have consistent and appropriate information on chemicals and their hazards.

The US's Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) just published its final hazard communication standard that's compliant with the GHS. Canada is expected to follow suit soon. Once Canada adopts the GHS, that system will replace WHMIS.

But when we asked if your company was taking any steps now to prepare for Canada's anticipated switch from WHMIS to the GHS, a full 50% of the 108 voters didn't know what the GHS is! And another 38% said they weren't taking any steps to prepare for the GHS.

## Starting Learning about the GHS Now

There are several reasons why it's important that you start learning about the GHS and figuring out how it'll impact your OHS program.

First, the GHS is coming to Canada. It's not a question of "if" but "when." Health Canada, Environment Canada and Transport Canada have already done some work exploring how to implement GHS in Canada. But now that the new US standard for

GHS is out, we'll probably see more progress in Canada.

Second, although it's likely that once the final GHS rules for Canada are established you'll have time to comply with them, waiting until then is a mistake. There are things you can be doing now to prepare for the transition and make it go smoother.

In addition, you may soon start seeing some GHS-compliant safety data sheets (SDSs—the GHS version of MSDSs), especially if you get any products covered by WHMIS from a US company.

According to CCOHS, Canadian regulatory authorities have said that they'll accept the 16-heading SDS format required by the GHS as compliant with MSDS requirements as long as all the information required by WHMIS is included. They also require SDSs to include a statement such as "This product has been classified according to the hazard criteria of the CPR and the MSDS contains all of the information required by the CPR" in the "Regulatory Information" section.

### **Bongarde Resources on GHS**

The OHS Insider has resources on GHS you should review *now* to get a sense of how the GHS will impact your workplace and what steps you can start taking to ease the transition to the GHS once it happens:

- The 'Globally Harmonized System' and What It Means to You
- 8 Things to Do Now to Prepare for the GHS
- Recorded Webinar: How GHS Will Change WHMIS.