



GHS – Globally Harmonized System and WHMIS 2015

What is it?

Canada has aligned the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) with the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). The goal of this change is to ensure that the same set of rules for classifying hazards, and the same format and content for labels and [Safety Data Sheets \(SDS\)](#) will be used around the world



Who does it affect?

The biggest impact of this transition will be on suppliers and manufacturers of hazardous goods, but employers should be aware of their responsibilities. These responsibilities have not changed with WHMIS 2015.

Employers must still:

- Ensure that all hazardous products have an up-to-date SDS when they enter the workplace.
- Educate and train workers on the hazards and safe use of the products used in the workplace.
- Ensure that hazardous materials are properly labelled.
- Prepare workplace labels and SDS as necessary (for example, when the product is produced and used in the workplace.)
- Provide access for workers to up-to-date SDSs.
- Ensure appropriate control measures are in place to protect the health and safety of workers.

Workers must still:

- Participate in WHMIS and chemical safety training programs.
- Take necessary steps to protect themselves and their co-workers.
- Participate in identifying and controlling hazards.

When is the deadline for GHS implementation?

Employers must complete transition to WHMIS 2015 by **December 1, 2018**. To achieve this, employers will be required to ensure hazardous products in the workplace meet the new labelling requirements, that new SDSs are readily available to workers and members of joint health and safety committees or worker representatives and that WHMIS 2015 training is completed for key staff by this date.



What should be done during the Transition Period?

According to the Alberta Government ([WorkSafe Alberta: OHS Bulletin - Transition from WHMIS 1988 to WHMIS 2015](#)), until the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code is amended, employers in Alberta must proceed as follows:



1. If there are no products with WHMIS 2015 safety data sheets (SDSs) and labels in the workplace, the employer continues to comply with WHMIS 1988 requirements.
2. If the employer receives a product that has an SDS and label complying with WHMIS 2015, they must comply with the WHMIS 2015 requirements. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Training must include content consistent with WHMIS 2015 for SDSs and labels for workers who work with or near the product(s)
 - The employer is not required to ensure the SDS is within three years of its latest revision as this requirement has been removed in WHMIS 2015 for suppliers. Suppliers must update SDSs as soon as significant information becomes available. Therefore, each time an employer purchases a hazardous product, they must ensure they are provided with the most current version of the supplier SDS.
3. If the employer receives a product that complies with WHMIS 2015, they may apply a work site label that complies with WHMIS 1988 to the product container. In this case, they can continue to only comply with WHMIS 1988 in the workplace. However, in addition to complying with the WHMIS 1988 requirements, they also must ensure the SDS provided with the product contains all of the information listed in Schedule 1 of the former federal Controlled Products Regulations.



Training and Consultation

The CCSA *Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Workshop* is a great option for key staff who are involved in or in charge of understanding and implementing the changes needed to comply with WHMIS 2015.



If you would like to register for the training please visit our [website](#). If there are no scheduled events that suit your requirements, please [contact](#) a CCSA educator to discuss booking.

The CCSA is also available to consult with you on-site to help you understand your specific requirements for WHMIS 2015 compliance. Contact us to arrange a consultation at 780-433-5330 or by email at ohs@ab-ccsa.ca.

Resources

[WorkSafe Alberta: OHS Bulletin - Transition from WHMIS 1988 to WHMIS 2015](#)

provides Alberta employers and workers with guidance on complying with WHMIS until the provincial OHS legislation is amended.

[The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety \(CCOHS\)](#) provides access to ample and useful information on GHS WHMIS, including easy-to-read, question-and-answer fact sheets.

CCOHS has a free webinar as presented by Health Canada: [WHMIS 2015 - How Canada is Adopting the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals \(GHS\) for Workplace Chemicals](#).

CCOHS has made available on-line courses to aid in learning about WHMIS after its alignment with GHS, “an internationally consistent approach to classifying chemicals and communicating hazard information through labels and safety data sheets (SDSs).”

- [WHMIS 2015 for Workers](#)
- [WHMIS 2015: An Introduction FREE!](#)

[WHMIS.org](#) provides information that enables employers or workers to filter information down to Alberta-specific changes that are in progress or completed; there are also a few free resources (fact sheets, etc.) which can be obtained from this site.



References

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety . (2016, December 02). *WHMIS 2015 - How Canada is Adopting the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) for Workplace Chemicals*. Retrieved from Webinars: https://www.ccohs.ca/products/webinars/ghs_canada/
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