










Hazard communications: Understanding product warning labels

Key takeaways:

- Hazard communication requires employers to make safety data sheets (SDS) available for all potentially hazardous chemicals in the workplace.
- All potentially hazardous substances must be labelled, regardless of the size and quantity.
- The nine pictograms associated with the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) communicate a hazard without words.
- Know where your company's safety data sheets are located.
- Name the six pieces of information that must be displayed on secondary containers.

Under Oregon OSHA's Hazard Communication standards, chemicals in the workplace must be classified and labeled in alignment with the United Nations' Globally Harmonized System (GHS). In addition to having a written hazard communication program, making safety data sheets (SDS) available, and educating employees on hazards, a major pillar of GHS requirements are the pictograms used to communicate hazard risks without words.

Employees should be familiar with the meanings of these pictograms:

Health hazard Carcinogens, respiratory sensitizers, reproductive toxicity, target organ toxicity, germ cell mutagens 	Flame Flammable gases, liquids, and solids; self-reactives; pyrophorics 	Exclamation mark Irritant, dermal sensitizer, acute toxicity (harmful) 
Gas cylinder Compressed gases; liquified gases; dissolved gases 	Corrosion Skin corrosion; serious eye damage 	Exploding bomb Explosives, self-reactives, organic peroxides 
Flame over circle Oxidizing gases; liquids and solids 	Environment Aquatic toxicity 	Skull & crossbones Acute toxicity (severe) 

Secondary containers

Chemicals that have been transferred into secondary containers must display the following information (found on the original container or safety data sheet):

- 1 Contents
- 2 Physical hazards
- 3 Health hazards
- 4 Protective measures
- 5 How to find more info

Take action

(Complete one or more activities as a team)

- A. Which pictogram is most frequently found in your facility? What is that chemical, how is it used, and what precautions does your team take to protect employees from risks?
- B. Are there any unlabeled containers in your area that are potentially hazardous but missing a pictogram? Review the safety data sheet for the chemical, then ensure the container displays the hazard pictogram and other required information (see above).
- C. Take a quick walk to where employees can access safety data sheets for hazards present in the workplace; review the sheet for the most hazardous chemical used.

