

# WHMIS 2015

This overview fact sheet has been prepared for your convenience to provide some basic information on the Globally Harmonized System for Classification of Chemicals (GHS) as well as how it will affect Federal and Provincial Hazardous Products and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) regulations. Much of the information is common across the country and the information is provided by excerpting and compiling from several fact sheet prepared by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) on WHMIS 2015 and GHS. For the original additional information we encourage you to follow the provided links.

WHMIS 2015 will used to refer to the legislation that applies to the new system of classification, labeling and safety data sheets for Hazardous Products. WHMIS 1988 will be used to refer to the system that existed prior to the introduction of WHMIS 2015.

## **What are WHMIS and GHS?**

WHMIS is the national hazard communication system that provides information on the safe use of hazardous products in Canadian workplaces.

GHS is an international initiative to standardize chemical hazard classification and communication globally. GHS has been adopted by many of Canada's trading partners, including the United States.

## **Does GHS replace WHMIS?**

No, GHS will not replace WHMIS. WHMIS will incorporate GHS concepts, specifically product classification, labeling and safety data sheets (SDS), thereby resulting in a new level of standardization.

## **What areas are being standardized?**

- classification criteria
- label requirements
- safety data sheet (SDS) requirements (what were currently known as material safety data sheet or MSDS under the previous WHMIS system)

## **What changes with standardization?**

While WHMIS retains the same level of protection it previously offered, some classification criteria have changed for WHMIS 2015. For example it incorporates new hazard classes, e.g. Aspiration Hazard. See the WHMIS 2015 Hazard Classes Fact Sheet, in [WHMIS after GHS Fact Sheets](#), for more information.

Supplier labels have a few new requirements. Most of the label elements are standardized. Most hazard classes and categories have a prescribed signal word, hazard statements, pictogram(s), and precautionary statement(s). Supplier labels continue to be required in both English and French. See the WHMIS 2015 Supplier Labels Fact Sheet, in [WHMIS after GHS Fact Sheets](#), for more information.

Hazard communication is more standardized with prescribed hazard statements, signal words, pictograms and precautionary statements. Pictograms immediately show the user of a hazardous product what type of hazard is present. It is a graphic image that, with a quick glance, you can see, for example, that the product is flammable, or if it might be a health hazard.

Most graphics have a distinctive red “square set on one of its points” border (diamond shaped). Inside the border is the symbol that represents the potential hazard. Together, the symbol and the border are referred to as a pictogram, and they are assigned to specific hazard classes or categories.

SDSs follow a standard 16-section format with specific information requirements. The SDSs must be accurate at the time of sale or import, for each sale or import. For further information, see the WHMIS 2015 Safety Data Sheets Fact Sheet, in [WHMIS after GHS Fact Sheets](#), for more information.

### **How are Roles, Responsibilities and Duties impacted?**

The current roles and responsibilities for suppliers, employers and employees remain unchanged in WHMIS 2015.

Suppliers still provide labels and SDSs to customers. See the WHMIS 2015 Information for Suppliers and Importers Fact Sheet, in [WHMIS after GHS Fact Sheets](#), for more information.

Employers still ensure that all hazardous products are properly labelled and make up-to-date SDSs readily available to workers. They also provide worker education and training and ensure appropriate control measures to protect the health and safety of employees. See the WHMIS 2015 Information for Employers Fact Sheet, in [WHMIS after GHS Fact Sheets](#), for more information.

Employees will still participate in WHMIS education and training programs, take necessary steps to protect themselves and their co-workers, and participate in identifying and controlling hazards.

### **When will WHMIS 2015 come into effect?**

Changes to the Federal Hazardous Products Act have already come into effect on February 13, 2015. Additionally, the previous Federal Controlled Products Regulation has been withdrawn and replaced with a new Hazardous Products Regulation that complements the Act. This has effectively made the new classification system, labelling system and safety data sheets legally authorized for distribution in workplaces in Canada. The Federal legislation and regulation also provides for a transition period such that products that conform to the previous legislation (WHMIS 1988) for classification, labels, and MSDS may continue to be handled as noted in the chart below.

Provincial and Territorial authorities have been working with their Federal counterparts to develop a common approach to WHMIS regulation in local jurisdictions. In Nova Scotia, work continues to ensure that the revised WHMIS regulation is consistent with



the requirements of the province and allows the overarching goal of ensuring a consistent approach with other jurisdictions to facilitate cross-border trade and a mobile workforce. If a workplace receives a hazardous product with labeling and SDS that conform to WHMIS 2015, then the employees that may be exposed to this product must have been educated on the new system and trained in the correct handling of the product. If product conforming to WHMIS 1988 remain in the workplace, then the employer must ensure that education and training in that system for that product remains current until the product is no longer present, or until the end of the transition period, whichever comes first.

**Will there be a transition period?**

Yes. A multi-year transition plan was announced (Federally). From now until May 31, 2017, suppliers (manufacturers and importers) can use WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015 to classify and communicate the hazards of their products (recall that suppliers must use one system or the other). Beginning June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018, distributors and suppliers importing for their own use can continue to use WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015.

PHASE	TIMING	SUPPLIERS		EMPLOYER
		Manufacturers and Importers	Distributors	
Phase 1	From February 11, 2015 to May 31, 2017	WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015	Consult Federal/Provincial/Territorial regulator
Phase 2	From June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018	WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015
Phase 3	From June 1, 2018 to November 30, 2018	WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 1988 or WHMIS 2015
Completion	December 1, 2018	WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 2015	WHMIS 2015

**Is there going to be a need to provide education and training in both old WHMIS 1988 and WHMIS 2015?**

Yes. Because of the transition period and availability of hazardous products under the old system, education and training on the 'old' WHMIS 1988 system will be necessary for as long as workplace products have 'old' WHMIS style labels and MSDSs - for example, until the product is re-labelled or existing stock is used up. This situation will



exist until all the old product is removed from workplace, or until the transition to WHMIS 2015 is complete, whichever comes first. At the end of the transition period, all product conforming to WHMIS 1988 must be removed, or relabeled and new data sheets provided, so only education and training on WHMIS 2015 will be required. The sooner the transition in the workplace is complete, the sooner their employees can be educated and trained on a single WHMIS system.

Additional CCOHS Resources OHS Answer Documents:

[WHMIS 2015 General](#)

[WHMIS 2015 Education and Training](#)

[WHMIS 2015 Hazard Classes and Categories](#)

[WHMIS 2015 Labels](#)

[WHMIS 2015 Safety Data Sheets \(SDS\)](#)