

## **Section 9: HAZARD COMMUNICATION and the GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM (GHS)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section provides King County work groups with the necessary information and tools to develop and implement a Hazard Communication and the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) program as required by WAC 296-901.

### **APPLICABILITY**

A Hazard Communication/GHS Program is intended to provide employees with the information they need to work safely with any potentially-hazardous chemicals they may use in the course of doing their jobs. In this document the program will be referred to as GHS.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each department, division, and work group must have a GHS program specific to their work site(s). An individual or group of people should be assigned responsibility for developing and maintaining the GHS program.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that:

- Employees are trained as described below.
- Current Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) are available to employees for all the hazardous chemicals they use in the course of their employment.
- Employees have all required personal protective equipment (PPE) and that they use it properly.

Employees are responsible for using hazardous chemicals and any associated personal protective equipment in accordance with training received.

### **DEVELOP A WRITTEN CHEMICAL GHS PROGRAM**

In order to comply with the chemical GHS standard each department/work group must develop, implement and maintain a written program. It must include:

- A list of the hazardous chemicals known to be present.
- A method to ensure that each container of hazardous chemicals in the workplace is labeled.
- Procedures for ensuring that a safety data sheet is obtained and made available for each hazardous chemical which is used.

- Provisions to provide employees with effective information and training on hazardous chemicals in their work area.

The written GHS must be available, upon request, to employees, their designated representatives, and the Department of Labor and Industries.

Where employees must travel between workplaces during a work shift, i.e., their work is carried out at more than one geographical location, the written GHS may be kept at the primary workplace facility.

Safety and Claims Management will assist with departments with the development of their Chemical GHS. Contact the Safety and Health Professional assigned to your department, or call Safety and Claims Management at 206-477-3350.

### **LIST ALL THE HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS PRESENT IN YOUR WORKPLACE**

Each work group/location must identify all hazardous chemicals which are known to be present in the workplace in such a manner that employees may be exposed under normal conditions of use or in a foreseeable emergency. Examples of hazardous chemicals are: acids, adhesives, caustics, fuels, paints, varnishes, shellacs and pesticides. The following are some ways to determine whether a product is hazardous:

- Look for words on the chemical's label that indicate that the chemical is flammable, an irritant, corrosive, carcinogenic, etc.
- Check the product's SDS for hazard information.
- If you have any questions about a chemical you have at your workplace, contact your Safety and Health Professional in Safety and Claims Management (477-3350).

### **Exemptions**

The following are exempt from the GHS rule:

- Consumer-type products (products that are used the same way they would be in the home. Consumer products include most cleaning products and supplies used by office employees.)
- Hazardous wastes including biological hazards and radiation
- Foods, drugs, tobacco, alcohol and cosmetics

The consumer product exemption does not apply if the product is used in greater

concentrations, quantity, or frequency that would normally occur with household use. For example, SDSs are required for all cleaning products used by custodians.

Enclosed items are also exempt from the GHS rule. These products contain hazardous substances that are not readily released when handled under normal conditions. Intact dry toner cartridges are covered by this exclusion.

### **Prepare a List of Hazardous Chemicals**

Each work group/location that stores or uses hazardous chemicals must maintain a current inventory of those chemicals. This inventory should be incorporated in the written GHS.

Safety and Claims Management will assist departments in organizing their workplace inventories. Contact the Safety and Health Professional assigned to your department.

### **LABEL ALL CONTAINERS HOLDING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS**

Manufacturers and distributors are required to label hazardous substances. Labels provide important hazard information and should not be removed or defaced.

Each facility that transfers a material from the primary container to a secondary container (for use, dilution, mixing etc.) must adhere to a secondary labeling system. Immediate supervisors will ensure that secondary container labeling materials are readily available. A wired tag may be appropriate for small containers and for materials that damage or erase inks.

The secondary label must list the product name as it appears on the inventory and SDS, along with applicable hazard warning information (e.g. 'flammable', 'poison', 'corrosive').

You are not required to label portable containers into which hazardous chemicals are transferred from labeled containers if the container is used and controlled by the same employee who performed the transfer within the same shift. Note that such unlabeled containers **MUST** be under the immediate control of the employee who performed the transfer and used or emptied during the same work shift.

### **OBTAIN AND MAINTAIN CURRENT SAFETY DATA SHEETS (SDSs)**

The manufacturer and distributor must provide Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for all products that contain hazardous chemicals. Each work group must maintain

SDSs for products containing hazardous chemical substances used by employees.

SDSs are a form of employee exposure records. Outdated SDSs or SDSs for products that are no longer used must be removed from the active SDS file, but must be retained and made available for a period of 30 years.

Prior to introduction of any new chemical into any King County work place, the immediate supervisor will ensure that an SDS is available and all affected employees have been trained in the safe use of the new chemical product. SDSs may be obtained using one of the following available resources:

- Obtain hard copies with shipments from the supplier or manufacturer;
- Download directly from the manufacturer via the internet;
- Download from an SDS library available on the internet (e.g., try <http://www.ilpi.com/msds/index.html> or use a search engine and the keyword SDS); or,
- Contact Safety and Claims Management (206-477-3350) if you experience difficulty in obtaining an SDS.

Your Safety and Health Professional will review and evaluate SDSs for significant health and/or safety information, on request.

### **Make Sure That Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) Are Readily Accessible To Employees**

SDSs must be readily available at all times to supervisors, employees and contractors who use or may be exposed to hazardous chemicals. Employees at remote work sites must have SDSs immediately available for all hazardous chemicals being used at that worksite.

This requirement can be met by maintaining hard copies of SDSs at each workplace, or by maintaining electronic files that can be easily viewed and printed. Note: If electronic SDS files are maintained, the employees must be able to readily access the files at their assigned work location. This will require that employees have access to a computer terminal either directly or via their supervisor.

### **INFORM AND TRAIN EMPLOYEES ABOUT HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS USED IN THE WORKPLACE**

Each Supervisor/Manager is responsible for ensuring that all King County employees who may be exposed to chemicals at work receive training prior to

assignment of tasks involving chemical use. Employees newly hired or transferring to new work locations shall be trained in the hazards associated with that job prior to any exposure. Training will include:

- An overview of the requirements of the GHS Standard (WAC 296-901).
- The details of the department/work group's GHS.
- A review of any operations in the work area where hazardous chemicals are present.
- An explanation of labels on containers and instruction in secondary labeling procedures.
- An explanation of Safety Data Sheets, including their location and availability.
- Physical and health effects of the chemical products used.
- Methods and techniques used to determine presence or release of hazardous chemicals into the work area (e.g., odor, physical effects).
- Explanation of how to reduce or prevent exposure to these hazardous chemicals through work practices and personal protective equipment, and a review of disposal and spill cleanup procedures.
- Review of controls that have been instituted to reduce or prevent exposure.
- Emergency procedures to follow if inadvertent contact/exposure occurs outside the acceptable range.

### **Non-Routine Tasks**

Employees are sometimes assigned to perform special tasks that involve hazardous chemicals, gases or materials. Prior to beginning special tasks, the supervisor shall provide each affected employee with information that includes:

- Specific chemical hazards.
- Proper use procedures the employee shall follow.
- Control measures to be taken to reduce the hazard such as ventilation, respirators, or presence of others as a safety watch.
- Emergency response procedures.

## **Contractor GHS**

Each organization shall provide contractors who come into a King County workplace with a listing of chemicals to which they may be exposed while on the job site, and any information regarding measures they may take to reduce exposure.

The King County Project Manager shall contact the contractor before work is started in a King County work place to gather information concerning any chemical hazards the contractor may be bringing into the work place. The Project Manager shall obtain SDSs for all hazardous chemicals brought into King County work places by a contractor.

The Project Manager should contact the Safety and Claims Management if there is any potential for hazardous exposures to employees or the public.

## **Rules For Laboratories Using Hazardous Chemicals**

Laboratories are required to have a written Chemical Hygiene Plan under [Chapter 296-828 WAC](#), if applicable. They are not required to have a written Chemical GHS.

Under the GHS Requirements for Laboratories, you must:

- Make sure that labels on incoming containers of hazardous chemicals are not removed or defaced.
- Maintain Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) received with incoming shipments of hazardous chemicals, and make them readily accessible to laboratory employees when they are in their work areas.
- Provide laboratory employees with information and training as described in the above section titled, "Inform and Train Employees About Hazardous Chemicals Used In the Workplace." You do not have to cover the location and the availability of the GHS.

## **Rules For Handling Chemicals In Factory-Sealed Containers**

This applies to situations where employees only handle chemicals in factory-sealed containers that are not opened under normal use (such as those found in trucking or warehousing). In those instances, you must:

- Make sure that labels on incoming containers of hazardous chemicals are not removed or defaced.

- Keep any SDSs that are received with incoming shipments of the sealed containers of hazardous chemicals. If a factory-sealed container of hazardous chemicals comes without an SDS, obtain one as soon as possible, if an employee requests it.
- Make sure that the SDSs are readily accessible during each work shift to employees when they are in their work area(s).
- Inform and train your employees about hazardous chemicals in your workplace, to protect them in case of a hazardous chemical spill or leak from a factory-sealed container. You do not have to cover the location and availability of the written chemical GHS.