

WHMIS 2015

This overview provides some basic information about WHMIS 2015.

Information that is common across Canada is available at WHMIS.org. This national WHMIS portal has fact sheets, FAQs, online courses, posters, and more.

WHMIS 2015 refers to the legislation that applies to the new system; WHMIS 1988 is used to refer to the old system of classification, labeling and safety data sheets for Hazardous Products.

Updating WHMIS to a global standard — GHS

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) is the Canadian hazard communication system that provides information on the safe use of hazardous products in Canadian workplaces.

Global Harmonization System (GHS) is an international initiative to standardize chemical hazard classification and communication globally.

Parts of GHS have been adopted by many trading partners, including the United States.

WHMIS is comprised of both federal and provincial/territorial legislation:

- The federal Hazardous Products Act (HPA) and Hazardous Products Regulations (HPR) regulate **suppliers** of hazardous products (defined as persons who, during business, sell or import a hazardous product)
- Federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) occupational health and safety (OHS) authorities regulate the **employer requirements** of WHMIS in workplaces.

Fully implementing WHMIS 2015 requires changes to the federal, provincial, and territorial OHS requirements for hazard communication — labels and safety data sheets (SDSs). The interlocking nature of the federal, provincial, and territorial WHMIS requirements involves the timing of implementation and the transition approach be coordinated across Canada. As each jurisdiction follows an independent legislative process, there may be a lag between the coming-into-force of the HPA and HPR and the timing of amendments to provincial and territorial legislation.

To address this issue, provincial and territorial OSH authorities have agreed to support a synchronized coming-into-force and transition across Canada until necessary changes are made to their legislation. Once finalized, each jurisdiction will communicate to its stakeholders what measures will be acceptable to ensure worker health and safety in workplaces.

Does GHS replace WHMIS?

No, GHS does not replace WHMIS. Rather, WHMIS will incorporate GHS concepts, specifically product classification, labeling, and safety data sheets (SDS). The result will be a new level of standardization.

What areas are being

- Classification criteria
- Label requirements
- Safety data sheet (SDS) requirements — called material safety data sheet or MSDS under the WHMIS 1988 system

Although the intent of the new WHMIS 2015 is to construct a standardized hazard communication system across countries, there are still some differences between trading partners. This means that an (M)SDS and label that is compliant with the U.S. Hazard Communication Standard (2012) may not be sufficient for compliance in Canada.

Suppliers and employers must be compliant with the Canadian requirements. Health Canada's "Technical Guidance on the Requirements of the Hazardous Products Act and Hazardous Products Regulations," available on WHMIS.org, clarifies these variances.

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, like Aspiration Hazard.

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, pictograms, and precautionary statements. Supplier labels continue to be required in both English and French.



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.

Are Roles, Responsibilities, and Duties

No, current roles and responsibilities for suppliers, employers, and employees remain unchanged in WHMIS 2015.

Suppliers still provide labels and SDSs to customers.

Employers still

- ensure that all hazardous products are properly labelled
- make up-to-date SDSs readily available to workers
- provide worker education and training
- ensure appropriate control measures to protect the health and safety of employees

Employees still

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

When will WHMIS 2015 come into effect?

Changes to the federal Hazardous Products Act came into effect February 2015. Additionally, the old federal Controlled Products Regulations has been withdrawn and replaced with a new Hazardous Products Regulation. 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 provided for a transition period. During that period, products that conform to the previous legislation (WHMIS 1988) for classification, labels, and MSDS could be sold and used until the end of the transition period. Note that the transition period ended December 1, 2018.

Provincial and territorial authorities have been working with 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.

Is there a need to provide education and in both old WHMIS 1988 and WHMIS 2015?

No, as WHMIS 1988 has been entirely phased out, all workplaces must have WHMIS 2015 compliant SDSs and labels and employees must be instructed in the new system.

In the new WHMIS 2015, provincial regulations education and training are separated to make the requirements easier to understand.

Education refers to the delivery of general or portable information to workers such as what a supplier label contains, what hazard symbols/pictograms mean, what information is on a material safety data sheet or safety data sheet. Education is required under both WHMIS 1988 and WHMIS 2015. Because the information is different for each of these, when new WHMIS 2015 hazardous material enter your workplace, additional education will need to be provided so workers know the differences and understand what these new requirements mean in the workplace.

Training is the same in both WHMIS 1988 and WHMIS 2015, in that it is workplace specific and enables workers to know such things as the hazards of the products they are using, what protection is needed specific to the work they are doing, how to store products safely, and what to do in case of emergency. Workplaces must continue to monitor as new products enter the workplace and adjust the training when products are used in a different way or if new information becomes available.

For more information, visit WHMIS.org or contact the NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education:

novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety

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