

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, or WHMIS, has undergone big changes since it was first introduced. In 2015, it was aligned with the Global Harmonized System (GHS) in an effort to reduce the burden and cost to producers and suppliers who export chemicals across the world. The original WHMIS program is now referred to as WHMIS 1988 and the new program is called WHMIS 2015.

WHMIS Exclusions

WHMIS 2015 legislation continues to have exclusions for products that are covered by other legislation including:

- ◆ Explosives as defined in the Explosives Act.
- ◆ Cosmetic, device, drug or food as defined in the Food and Drugs Act.
- ◆ Pest control products as defined in the Pest Control Products Act.
- ◆ Consumer products as defined in the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act.
- ◆ Wood or products made of wood.
- ◆ Nuclear substances within the meaning of the Nuclear Safety and Control Act.
- ◆ Hazardous waste sold for recycling or recovery and is intended for disposal.
- ◆ Tobacco and tobacco products as defined in the Tobacco Act.
- ◆ Manufactured articles.

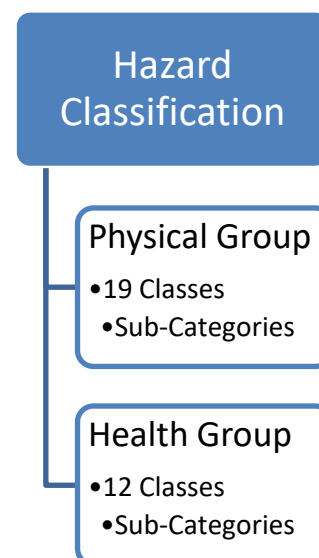
New Hazard Classification

The classification system for WHMIS 2015 is vastly different than WHMIS 1988, and is detailed in the amended Hazardous Products Act and the new Hazardous Products Regulation. The classification includes 2 hazard groups:

- ◆ physical hazards such as flammability or corrosivity.
- ◆ health hazards such as irritation, respiratory effects, or diseases including cancer.

Manufacturers, suppliers, and importers are required to evaluate substances using all available data against criteria for each hazard class, and then further classify into sub-categories. Sub-categories are generally listed in order of hazard potential, with 1 being more hazardous than 4.

Further information on the hazard classes is available at CCOHS.



Hazard Pictograms

WHMIS 2015 introduces new hazard pictograms for use on supplier labels and safety data sheets. As can be seen at right, all pictograms except one of these have a distinctive red diamond border.

Most of the pictograms denote a number of hazard classes and categories. For example, the corrosion pictogram at right is used with the following classes and categories in WHMIS 2015:

- ◆ Corrosive to metals (Category 1).
- ◆ Skin corrosion/irritation - Skin corrosion (Category 1, 1A, 1B and 1C).
- ◆ Serious eye damage/eye irritation - Serious eye damage (Category 1).

Not all hazard classes and categories have a pictogram associated with them, including simple asphyxiants, combustible dusts, and flammable liquids (Category 4).

Alberta Labour has published an informative publication that includes a comparison [chart](#) of WHMIS 1988 and WHMIS 2015 pictograms.

Safety Data Sheets

In an effort to provide detailed information in a consistent manner, WHMIS 2015 specifies the content and format for the safety data sheet (SDS), which replaces the material safety data sheet from WHMIS 1988. The new format includes 16 sections in the specified order presented in the table on the following page. Content for sections 13 – 15 is optional, but the section headings must still be present. Canadian suppliers must make SDSs available in English and French.

SDSs must be readily available to everyone in the workplace. This may be in a binder or electronically on a computer. Employers must train workers on how to access SDSs and understand their contents.

Rather than a firm expiry date, SDSs must be accurate at each time of sale or importation. Therefore, suppliers must keep SDSs updated when significant new data becomes available.



Section	WHMIS 2015 Headings	Section	WHMIS 2015 Headings
1	Identification	9	Physical and Chemical Properties
2	Hazard Identification (Including Classification and Label Text)	10	Stability and Reactivity
3	Composition/Information on Ingredients	11	Toxicological Information
4	First-aid Measures	12	Ecological Information
5	Fire-fighting Measures	13	Disposal Considerations
6	Accident Release Measures	14	Transport Information
7	Handling and Storage	15	Regulatory Information
8	Exposure Controls / Personal Protection	16	Other Information (including latest revision date of the SDS)

Container Labeling

Supplier labels play a key role in bringing a worker’s attention to the hazards of a container’s content. The distinctive hash-marked border and MSDS statement required for WHMIS 1988 is no longer a requirement for WHMIS 2015 supplier labels. WHMIS 2015 supplier labels must provide the following information:

- ◆ Product Identifier must state the product name exactly as it appears on the container and SDS.
- ◆ Hazard Pictograms as determined by the hazard classification of the product. In some cases, no pictogram is required.
- ◆ Signal Words “Danger” or “Warning” are used to emphasize hazards and indicate the severity of the hazard.
- ◆ Hazard Statements provide brief standardized statements of all hazards based on the hazard classification of the product.
- ◆ Precautionary Statements that describe recommended measures to minimize or prevent adverse effects from exposure to the product, including protective equipment and emergency measures.
- ◆ Supplier Identifier is the company which made, packaged, sold or imported the product, and is responsible for the label and SDS.
- ◆ The label content must be presented in English and French.

The content requirements of workplace labels will be specified by provincial legislation, and may vary according to jurisdiction. However, they will typically require the following content:

- ◆ Product Identifier as it appears on the container and SDS.
- ◆ Safe Handling Precautions may include pictograms or other supplier label information.
- ◆ Statement informing readers to see SDS for more information.

An example of WHMIS 2015 labels is available at CCOHS.

WHMIS 2015 Implementation

Health Canada set out a 3-year implementation schedule for Canadian suppliers and employers in Canada as illustrated below. However, it is likely that workplace responsibilities for training and SDSs availability will have to be implemented ahead of the final transition date if hazardous product SDSs or labels are provided early in the transition periods. See the worker training discussion below for more information.

Legislation		Affecting	Regarding	Transition
Federal	Hazardous Products Act	Hazardous Product Suppliers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manufacturers Importers 	Hazardous Product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classification Supplier Labels SDS's 	Until May 31, 2018
	Hazardous Products Regulation	Hazardous Product Suppliers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributors 	Hazardous Product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classification Supplier Labels SDS's 	Until Aug. 31, 2018
Provincial	WHMIS Regulations	Workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers Supervisors Workers 	Hazardous Product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment SDS's Training Workplace Labels 	Until Dec. 1, 2018

Worker Training

For workplaces under provincial jurisdiction, worker education and training falls under the jurisdiction of provincial regulatory agencies like the Ontario Ministry of Labour (MOL). Ontario regulations have been updated to mesh with the Federal WHMIS 2015 legislation, but employers should not wait for the final transition dates before training. During the transition, it will be necessary to make workers aware of all hazardous product information using the form that is provided by suppliers. Therefore training in both WHMIS 2015 and WHMIS 1988 systems will be required until the transition to WHMIS 2015 is complete.

Please contact [PandRS](#) if you would like to discuss a customized WHMIS training plan that meets the needs of WHMIS legislation during the transition period.

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