

# Changes to workplace chemical laws in Australia – transition to GHS 7

On **1 January 2021**, a two-year transition period from the 3rd revised edition of the GHS (GHS 3) to the 7th revised edition of the GHS (GHS 7) will commence.

## Transition to GHS 7

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) was developed by the United Nations to create a single, global method for chemical classification, labelling and safety data sheets (SDS). Australia currently uses GHS 3 for the classification, labelling and SDS of workplace hazardous chemicals.

Australia will officially begin the transition to GHS 7 on **1 January 2021**. The transition period is for two years and will end on **31 December 2022**.

During this time, manufacturers and importers of workplace hazardous chemicals may use either GHS 3 or GHS 7 to classify hazardous chemicals and to prepare labels and SDS. Once the transition period has ended on 31 December 2022, only GHS 7 may be used.

The two-year transition period will:

- allow time for manufacturers and importers to prepare new classifications, labels and SDS for their hazardous chemicals (if necessary),
- keep Australia in line with our key chemical trading partners, who are also adopting GHS 7, and
- ensure classifications, labels and SDS are based on the most up-to-date system of classification and hazard communication.

## Special arrangements for 1 July 2020 to 1 January 2021

Australia's transition to GHS 7 was originally intended to start on 1 July 2020 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that any importers and manufacturers that had already begun work on implementing GHS 7 were not disadvantaged, state and territory governments agreed to allow businesses to start classifying and labelling chemicals in accordance with GHS 7 from 1 July 2020. Suppliers and end users are also allowed to supply and use GHS 7 labelled chemicals during this period. For more information about the arrangements in place in your area, you should contact your local WHS regulator.

## What's new in GHS 7?

GHS 7 introduces several changes to classification, labelling and SDS requirements for workplace hazardous chemicals. The key changes between GHS 3 and GHS 7 are:

- new hazard categories and classes for:
  - desensitised explosives
  - pyrophoric gases

- chemically unstable gases
- non-flammable aerosols
- updated precautionary statements.

In addition to these changes, the definition of 'hazardous chemical' will be clarified to ensure it captures all Category 2 eye irritants. Chemicals can be further sub-categorised as Category 2A and 2B, but this is not mandatory in Australia.

## What do you need to do?

**Manufacturers and importers** of workplace hazardous chemicals should begin preparing updated classifications, labels and SDS in line with the criteria set out in GHS 7. This is particularly important if you import or manufacture:

- flammable gases, especially pyrophoric gases or chemically unstable gases
- non-flammable aerosols
- desensitised explosives, or
- Category 2 eye irritants.

From 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022, you can use either GHS 3 or GHS 7 to classify hazardous chemicals and to prepare labels and SDS. As of 31 December 2022, you can only use GHS 7.

New precautionary statements introduced as part of GHS 7 must be added to labels and SDS. GHS 7 also provides greater flexibility in the use of precautionary statements, including combining precautionary statements and allowing for variations of text provided that it does not affect the safety message. If the meaning of the precautionary statement has not changed between GHS 3 and GHS 7, you do not need to update the precautionary statements on labels and SDS.

For more information, see the information sheet for manufacturers and importers of workplace hazardous chemicals: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/manufacturers-and-importers-workplace-hazardous-chemicals-transition-ghs-7>

**Suppliers and users of hazardous chemicals** are not affected by the move to GHS 7. They may continue to supply and use chemicals classified and labelled under GHS 3 until their stocks run out, even if that occurs after 31 December 2022.

For more information, see the information sheet for suppliers and users of workplace hazardous chemicals: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/suppliers-and-users-workplace-hazardous-chemicals-transition-ghs-7>

## Further information

See our suite of guidance documents on the transition to GHS 7: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/ghs-7-transition>