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GHS to bring changes to labeling, classification of hazardous chemicals

Fort Rucker, Ala.---Soldiers and Civilians who handle hazardous chemicals as part of their job will soon begin training for changes coming to the labeling and classification of chemicals in the workplace.

The Globally Harmonized System, a United Nations initiative recently adopted by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, will standardize the way chemical-based hazards are communicated to workers, primarily through labeling and safety data sheets.

"Exposure to hazardous chemicals is one of the most serious hazards facing American workers today," said Dr. David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health. "Revising OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard to harmonize with global standards will improve the quality and consistency of hazard information, making it safer for workers to do their jobs and easier for employers to stay competitive."

Integration of the GHS at Army locations will be completed through several phases, training being the first. Leaders and managers will have until Dec. 1, 2013, to ensure their Soldiers and employees are trained to standard on new label elements and safety data sheet format. Implementation of all GHS requirements must be completed by June 1, 2016.

"The GHS enhances hazard communication and will ultimately make the workplace safer," said Rachel Baccigalopi, Civilian Injury Prevention Directorate, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center.

"Standardization will allow our Soldiers and Civilians to more accurately identify risks and take necessary precautions, especially when working with hazardous chemicals overseas or with chemicals that come from international manufacturers."

The USACR/Safety Center has developed several GHS awareness tools, including a training support package, to assist with the transition. The package contains a lesson plan, training presentation, supporting reference materials and train-the-trainer video for use in GHS training sessions. It and other GHS resources are available at <https://safety.army.mil/ghs>.