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AIHA[®] Supports OSHA's Update of Hazard Communication Standard

FAIRFAX, VA, (March 20, 2012) — The American Industrial Hygiene Association[®] (AIHA) today offered its support for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) final rule updating the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (HCS). The final rule revises the HCS so that it is in alignment with the United Nations' Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS).

“After more than 25 years since adoption of the HCS, AIHA is pleased that OSHA has finalized this update and fully supports provisions that update the development and distribution of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for hazardous chemicals”, said Elizabeth Pullen, CIH, and AIHA President.

“The new Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) not only greatly improve the quality of MSDSs by establishing a harmonized structure and meaningful recommendations of content but will improve the protection provided to workers, employers and chemical users”, stated Pullen.

While AIHA has not yet reviewed the entire final rule to determine specific requirements for training, exposure guidelines, hazard categories and other possible changes, AIHA believes that more standardized labels and SDSs will make hazard communication information easier to use and therefore improve employee protection from hazards. This is one of the main benefits of GHS implementation in addition to economic ones.

“With the continued expansion of the global economy, particularly in the manufacture and increased use of hazardous chemicals, many AIHA members have extensive experience and direct involvement with technical and policy issues regarding MSDSs and are involved in the development or review of MSDS for their employers. Aligning the HCS with the GHS will provide AIHA members better tools to protect workers on a worldwide basis” Pullen stated.

One area AIHA believes AIHA members can be of specific assistance to OSHA is the implementation stage of the final rule. Pullen said, “Industrial hygienists have a key role in improving the quality and value of information on an SDS. We intend to educate our members and others about the current activities related to the preparation and use of SDSs, including efforts to increase their quality and utility, implementation of a globally harmonized approach to their presentation, and updating the existing standards that provide guidance for development. AIHA pledges our full assistance to OSHA, other regulatory bodies, industry, and the international community, and will continue to monitor, comment and advise in this process in order to promote

the best safety and health information to all users. AIHA is in the process of putting together plans for training in hazard communication and will shortly announce such plans.”

In conclusion, Pullen stated that “Labor Secretary Solis and Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels are to be commended for seeing this effort through to completion in what has been a long and difficult process”.

For information about the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (HCS), please contact Aaron Trippler at atrippler@aiha.org or 703-846-0730.

Founded in 1939, the **American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)** is the premier association of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals. AIHA’s 10,077 members play a crucial role on the front line of worker health and safety every day. Members represent a cross-section of industry, private business, labor, government and academia.