

# Gov't Requires New Labels For Hazardous Chemicals

Sam Hananel, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration announced long-awaited regulations Tuesday to improve labels on hazardous chemicals and make them conform with international guidelines developed by the United Nations.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimated that such labels could prevent more than 40 deaths and about 500 workplace injuries and illnesses from exposure to hazardous chemicals each year.

Assistant Labor Secretary David Michaels said labels will be easier to understand and less confusing, especially for low-literacy workers. About 43 million U.S. workers come in contact with hazardous materials on the job.

The process of developing the rules began during the Bush administration, and the rules were initially proposed more than two years ago. The Obama administration is holding them out as a product of a presidential directive last year to streamline burdensome agency regulations and eliminate red tape.

Chemical manufacturers currently have to produce two sets of labels and records: one to satisfy U.S. standards and another to meet the U.N. guidelines. OSHA officials said that by ending the duplication, the industry could save more than \$475 million annually in training costs and paperwork.

"Not only will it save lives and limbs, but it will lead to increased efficiency on part of employers who produce and purchase chemicals," Michaels said. "And it will level the playing field for employers to compete abroad."

The rules will be phased in over a transition period and companies will not have to comply with them fully until June 2016.

Elizabeth Pullen, president of the American Industrial Hygiene Association, a trade group representing health and safety professionals in the chemical industry, said the new labels will improve protection for workers, employers and chemical users.

Marc Freedman, executive director of labor law policy for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said businesses generally support the idea of revising label requirements. But he said OSHA went too far by requiring labels to include hazard information about combustible dust — tiny particles that can catch fire as a result of producing chemicals, plastics, metals and foods.

"It's going to create a lot of confusion and uncertainty, which will undermine whatever other value this regulation provides to these companies," Freedman said.

## **Gov't Requires New Labels For Hazardous Chemicals**

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 10/24/2014 - 9:09am):**

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/03/govt-requires-new-labels-hazardous-chemicals>