# Safety is a Common Language Infographic





EYES ON TASK

# GIVING SAFETY
## A COMMON LANGUAGE / RAY PREST

The seeds for the Global Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS) were sown in 1992 when the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development suggested a "globally harmonized hazard classification and compatible labelling system, including material safety data sheets and easily understandable symbols, should be available, if feasible, by the year 2000." A short 23 years later (and 15 years after the initial deadline), 67 countries are well on their way to implementing the GHS system.

I'll balance my witticism on the UN's delay with respect for the scale and importance of such an undertaking—it's been a lot of work for them, and for you. By now you've probably read a number of articles, handouts, bulletins, and other resources (perhaps even hired a consultant or two) to get educated about the new system. So, I'll spare you the detailed overview of the specific mechanics of how GHS functions and your compliance requirements, and instead focus on the broader lesson GHS represents—the importance of developing a communication standard for a common safety language (even if just within your facility or organization).

The main problems that GHS aims to solve—hazard communication and developing a comprehensive system for classifying risk—aren't limited to chemical labeling. Compliance efforts typically drive a company's safety focus, but they only apply to individual countries. There's also a great number of issues that compliance measures don't effectively deal with, most notably human factors.

WHAT IF WE COULD DEVELOP A SAFETY LANGUAGE THAT APPLIED TO THE CORE VALUES OF THE SAFETY PROFESSION AND EXTENDED BEYOND NATIONAL COMPLIANCE LAWS?

**Source:** https://safestart.app.box.com