

BACKGROUND - EC DIRECTIVES AND BRITISH REGULATIONS

1. In order to make sure people at work and in the home are properly informed about the dangers of chemicals a series of EC Directives have been agreed. These Directives also help the Single Market in chemicals by applying a uniform classification and labelling system throughout the EU. These "classification and labelling" directives are implemented in the UK by the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 (CHIP 3). The main outputs of CHIP are warning labels and safety data sheets.

2. The duty to label correctly rests with the supplier of the chemical. It is technically difficult to determine which chemicals are dangerous, so to assist business HSE publishes a number of supporting documents, all based on EC directives.

3. The CHIP package consists of:

- a) the Regulations;
- b) two documents which are formally linked to the Regulations:
 - an "Approved Supply List" (ASL) which prescribes standard classifications and labels for many chemicals; and
 - an "Approved Classification and Labelling Guide" (ACLG) which tells business how to work out if chemicals not on the ASL are dangerous; and
- c) one Approved Code of Practice:
 - an Approved Code of Practice on Safety Data Sheets.

4. The current ASL gives the agreed classification of about 3000 substances. Suppliers of chemicals not on the ASL are obliged, under CHIP, to work out their own classification and label the chemicals accordingly. Suppliers of substances included on the ASL just have to look them up.

5. Where possible HSE has tried to give dutyholders a transitional period when an amendment to CHIP is introduced as this:

- helps discourage suppliers from disposing of chemicals, instead of relabelling, thereby protecting workers and the environment from unnecessary exposure;
- allows suppliers to use the new information, eg in their safety data sheets, to improve the standard of information received by users;
- ensures suppliers have information on changes as soon as possible and are able to plan their introduction - this is especially important for those suppliers further down the supply chain so

they can make changes without waiting for information from their own suppliers; and

- reduces costs associated with relabelling.

6. The CHIP regulations are supported by a range of advisory publications and a specific section of the HSE website (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/chip>)