GHS – Landscaping Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

The Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals is an internationally standardized approach to managing chemical hazards. Understanding GHS is crucial for maintaining safety when working with various chemicals, such as fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

WHAT´S THE DANGER

Chemicals used in landscaping can pose serious health and safety risks if not properly managed. The GHS provides a standardized system for identifying and communicating these hazards, and to prevent accidents.

Specific Risks

1. **Chemical Exposure**
   - **Inhalation:** Many landscaping chemicals can release fumes or dust that can be inhaled, leading to respiratory issues, dizziness, or more severe health problems.
   - **Skin Contact:** Direct contact with certain chemicals can cause skin irritation, rashes, or chemical burns.
   - **Ingestion:** Accidental ingestion of chemicals can occur if workers eat, drink, or smoke without washing their hands after handling hazardous substances, leading to poisoning or other health issues.
1. **Improper Storage and Handling**
   - **Spills and Leaks:** Improper storage or handling of chemicals can result in spills or leaks.
   - **Incompatible Chemicals:** Storing incompatible chemicals together can lead to dangerous reactions, such as fires, explosions, or the release of toxic gases.

1. **Environmental Impact**

- **Contamination:** Improper disposal or use of landscaping chemicals can lead to soil, water, and air contamination, harming wildlife and ecosystems.
- **Drift and Runoff:** Chemicals that drift during application or run off into nearby water sources can have significant environmental impacts, including harming aquatic life and polluting drinking water supplies.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Understanding GHS Labels and SDS

1. **GHS Labels**

- **Pictograms:** GHS labels use pictograms to communicate specific hazards. For example, a flame symbol indicates flammability, while a skull and crossbones indicate toxicity.
- **Signal Words:** Labels also include signal words such as “Danger” or “Warning” to indicate the severity of the hazard. “Danger” is used for more severe hazards, while “Warning” is for less severe hazards.
- **Hazard Statements:** These are short phrases describing the nature of the hazard, such as “Causes skin irritation” or “Toxic if inhaled.”
- **Precautionary Statements:** These provide guidance on how to handle the chemical safely.

1. **Safety Data Sheets (SDS)**

- **Sections of the SDS:** An SDS is a detailed document that provides comprehensive information about a chemical. It is divided into 16 sections, including identification, hazard identification, composition, first-aid measures, firefighting measures, accidental release measures, handling and storage, exposure controls, and personal protection.
- **Accessing the SDS:** Ensure that the SDS for every chemical used on the job site is readily accessible to all workers.

Employees should be trained on how to read and understand these documents.

Safe Handling and Use of Chemicals

1. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- **Appropriate PPE:** Always wear the appropriate PPE as specified on the GHS label or SDS. This may include gloves, goggles, face shields, respirators, or protective clothing.
- **Proper Use:** Ensure that PPE is properly fitted and used according to instructions.

1. **Safe Storage and Handling**

- **Correct Storage:** Store chemicals in their original containers with GHS labels intact.
- **Handling Procedures:** Follow proper procedures for transferring, mixing, or applying chemicals.

1. **Spill Response**

- **Immediate Action:** In the event of a spill, follow the spill response procedures outlined in the SDS. This may include evacuating the area and notifying the appropriate authorities.
- **Cleanup and Disposal:** Clean up spills promptly using the proper equipment and dispose of contaminated materials according to local regulations. Never wash chemicals down drains or into water sources.

Training and Communication

1. **Regular Training**

- **GHS Training:** Provide regular training sessions for all employees on GHS, including how to read labels and SDS, the hazards associated with chemicals used on the job, and the proper use of PPE.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Train workers on emergency response procedures for chemical spills, exposure, and fires. Conduct regular drills to ensure everyone knows what to do in an emergency.

1. **Clear Communication**
    - **Labeling:** Ensure that all containers, including secondary containers, are GHS-compliant labeled.
    - **Team Coordination:** Communicate with your team about the chemicals being used on the job site.

FINAL WORD

By understanding GHS labels, using Safety Data Sheets effectively, and following safe handling practices, workers can significantly reduce the risk of chemical-related injuries and environmental harm.