

Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized
System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

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Item 2 (h) of the provisional agenda

**Work on the Globally Harmonized System (GHS):
improvement of annexes 1 to 3 and further
rationalization of precautionary statements**

Status of the work of the Annex 1-3 informal working group

**Transmitted by the expert from United Kingdom on behalf of the
informal working group**

Introduction

1. This informal paper provides an update on the work undertaken by the informal working group on the revision of Annexes 1, 2 and 3 since the fortieth session of the Sub-Committee in July 2021.

Background

2. At the thirty-ninth session, the Sub-Committee agreed the group's programme of work for the 2021-2022 biennium¹ and at the fortieth session of the Sub-Committee, an update on the progress of the working group was provided² together with formal proposals on various amendments to Annex 3.

3. Although a number of the proposals to amend sections 2 and 3 of Annex 33 were adopted at the fortieth session⁴, the Sub-Committee requested further consideration was undertaken regarding the P354 proposals to address an ambiguity in the skin corrosion combined statement P302+P361+P354 "IF ON SKIN: Take off immediately all contaminated clothing. Immediately rinse with water for several minutes."³

4. In relation to the proposed combination statement amendments to Annex 35, the Sub-Committee supported most of these in principle but requested that they were represented in a clearer format and that further consideration was required regarding the applicability of P373 to Type A self-reactive substances and mixtures and Type A organic peroxides.

5. The informal working group presently has approximately 70 members, reflecting the importance of, and interest in, this work to improve Annexes 1 to 3. Its membership includes experts with specialised knowledge of the various hazard classes within the GHS and experts on national legislation that implements GHS.

¹ see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/78 and informal document INF.21 (39th session)

² see informal document INF.17 (40th session)

³ see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2021/2

⁴ see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/80

⁵ see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2021/1

Status report

6. Since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee, the working group has actively taken forward, via correspondence, the outstanding issues from the discussions at the fortieth session, as well as several other items on its work programme.

I. Combination statement proposals - update on progress of issues

7. The group has undertaken a lot of work on the development of the combinations statement proposals since the initial thought starter was produced in January 2021, and in line with the comments received from members of the group, was followed by the formal working document on these issues that was presented at GHS 40.

8. Taking on board the comments that were received at the fortieth session, a further thought starter to address outstanding issues was produced and circulated to the group in July 2021. Although the group discussions are still on-going, the following is a brief summary of the issues and their current status and to enable the Sub-Committee to provide an initial view on these issues which may assist the group to reach a consensus on these issues with the aim of providing formal proposals for the forty-second session. The issues are as follows:

Retention of combined hazard statements and combined precautionary statements

9. In 2021/1 (see paragraphs 4 to 7 and 25 to 28) overall, the group had concluded that users of the GHS would benefit from retaining the existing combined hazard and combined precautionary statements in the tables as they demonstrate how such combinations could be achieved. This was supported in principle by the Sub-Committee, so no further work has taken place on this issue.

Acute toxicity combined hazard statements

10. As detailed in paragraphs 8 to 12 of 2021/1, the group concluded that the entries for the two-statement acute toxicity combined statements were unnecessary in Table A3.1.2 and proposed to delete them all from the table. This proposal was supported in principle by the Sub-Committee, so no further work has been undertaken on this issue, though it will be addressed in the revised formal proposals on combination statements for consideration at the forty-second session.

H315 + H320 “Causes skin and eye irritation”

11. At the fortieth session, the Sub-Committee supported the retention the H315 + H320 for skin corrosion/irritation category 2 and serious eye damage/eye irritation 2B and the introduction of a separate new entry for H315 + H319 for skin corrosion/irritation category 2 and serious eye damage/eye irritation category 2/2A, together with an explanatory note, into Table A3.1.2.

12. Two options were then considered by the group for the combination statement H315 + H319, together with an associated explanatory note, the options for the statement are as follows:

Combined hazard statement option 1:

“Causes skin and serious eye irritation ¹”

Combined hazard statement option 2:

“Causes skin irritation and serious eye irritation ¹”

13. In addition, two slightly different options were considered by the group for the explanatory footnote associated with both the combined hazard statements H315 + H319 and H315 + H320. These are as follows:

Footnote option 1:

¹ Competent authorities may select the applicable hazard statement(s) depending on the hazard categories implemented in their jurisdiction.

Footnote option 2:

“¹ Competent authorities may select the applicable hazard statement(s) depending on the serious eye damage/eye irritation hazard categories implemented in their jurisdiction (2/2A or 2A/2B).”

14. Given that the group discussions on this issue are still on-going, the following table is provided for illustrative purposes only to demonstrate what the amendments could look in Table A3.1.2, using some of the options outlined above (new text is in bold underlined and deleted text in strikethrough).

Code	Health hazard statements	Hazard class (GHS chapter)	Hazard category
<u>H315</u> ± <u>H319</u>	<u>Causes skin and serious eye irritation</u> ¹	<u>Skin corrosion/irritation (chapter 3.2) and serious eye damage/eye irritation (chapter 3.3)</u>	<u>2 (skin) + 2/2A (eye)</u>
H315 + H320	Causes skin and eye irritation ¹	Skin corrosion/irritation (chapter 3.2) and serious eye damage/eye irritation (chapter 3.3)	2 (skin) ± 2B (eye)

¹ Competent authorities may select the applicable hazard statement(s) depending on the hazard categories implemented in their jurisdiction.

15. Although several members considered that option 1 for the combined hazard statement for H315 + H320 (as provided in the table above) was clearer, more concise and avoided repetition of the word: ‘irritation’ within the same statement, the discussions within the group on the wording has not been completed. Similarly, discussions of the wording for the explanatory note are still on-going.

16. Hence, the group welcomes the initial views from the Sub-Committee on the options put forward for both the combined hazard statement and the footnote to assist the group to reach a consensus on these issues.

Variations in the text of combined hazard statements and combined precautionary statements

17. Paragraphs 18 and 19 of 2021/1 outlined proposed amendments to A3.1.2.3 and to A3.1.2.4 to provide clarity on minor textual amendments that are allowed when combining hazard statements, which were supported in principle by the Sub-Committee. The draft proposal for A3.1.2.3 is reproduced below (new text in bold underline and deleted text in strikethrough) from 2021/1, whilst the text for A3.1.2.4 has been amended slightly following further consideration by the group, The working group welcomes views from the Sub-Committee on the proposed amendments as provided as follows (new text is in bold underlined and deleted text in strikethrough):

“A3.1.2.3 In addition to individual hazard statements, a number of combined hazard statements are given in Table A3.1.2. The alphanumeric codes for the combined statements are constructed from the codes for the individual statements that are combined, conjoined with the plus (“+”) sign. For example, H300+H310+**H330** indicates that the text to appear on the label is “Fatal if swallowed, ~~or~~ in contact with skin **or if inhaled**”.

“A3.1.2.4 All assigned hazard statements should appear on the label unless otherwise specified in 1.4.10.5.3.3. The competent authority may specify the order in which they appear. Also, where a combined hazard statement is ~~indicated for~~ **consisting of** two or more hazard statements **is needed due to limited space on the label**, the competent authority may specify whether the

combined hazard statement or the corresponding individual statements should appear on the label or may leave the choice to the manufacturer/supplier.”

18. However, at the fortieth session the Sub-Committee suggested that further clarity was introduced to the text for the proposed new paragraphs A3.1.2.5 (see 2021/1, paragraphs 18 to 19) and A3.2.5.2.4 (see 2021/1, paragraphs 25 to 28) on minor textual changes such as the use of a joining words (e.g. “and”, “or”) and/or punctuation to remove repetitive text and improve the readability when combining hazard statements or precautionary statements, respectively.

19. The group have revised these proposed new paragraphs to address the concerns raised at the fortieth session. However, two options for the proposed new paragraph A3.1.2.5 have now been put forward for consideration to address the concerns raised. These two options are as follows:

Option 1 for A3.1.2.5:

“A3.1.2.5 To provide greater clarity and improve readability when more than one hazard statement appears, minor textual changes are allowed, such as the removal of text that would be repetitive in the combined statement, use of joining words (e.g. “and”, “or”), use of additional punctuation, and the change of case of the initial letter of the word at the beginning of a statement, where this contributes to the comprehensibility of label information and all hazards are clearly conveyed.”

Option 2 for A3.1.2.5:

“A3.1.2.5 When there is more than one health hazard statement of equivalent severity, those hazard statements may be combined if there is insufficient space on the label. When hazard statements are combined, all hazards must be clearly conveyed and only the repetitive text may be deleted. For example, H317 “May cause an allergic skin reaction” + H340 “May cause genetic defects” + H350 “May cause cancer” may all be combined because they are all Category 1 health hazards and have repetitive elements of the hazard statement (i.e., the statements begin with “may cause”). If there is insufficient space on the label to separately list these three hazard statements, the statements may be combined to “May cause an allergic skin reaction, genetic defects, and cancer.” The competent authority may limit the types of combinations permitted to ensure comprehensibility (e.g., limit the number of hazard statements that can be combined).”

20. The current draft of the proposed new paragraph for A3.2.5.2.4 is:

“A3.2.5.2.4 To provide greater clarity and improve readability when more than one precautionary statement appears, minor textual changes are allowed, such as the removal of text that would be repetitive in the combined statement, use of joining words (e.g. “and”, “or”), use of additional punctuation (e.g. commas “,”), and the change of case of the initial letter of the word at the beginning of a statement, where this contributes to the comprehensibility of label information and all precautions are clearly conveyed. For example, P302+P335+P334 “IF ON SKIN: Brush off loose particles from skin and immerse in cool water [or wrap in wet bandages].”

21. The group welcomes any comments that the Sub-Committee may have on the two options that are provided for the proposed new paragraph A3.1.2.5 and also on the proposed new paragraph A3.2.5.2.4.

Square brackets around precautionary statement codes

22. As detailed in paragraphs 33 to 35 of 2021/1, the group had identified an inconsistency that although there is explanatory text in A3.2.4.4 regarding use of

square brackets around a statement, there is no explanatory text regarding the use of square brackets around a code and had proposed introducing a new paragraph A3.2.2.4 as follows:

“A3.2.2.4 Where square brackets [...] appear around a precautionary statement code, this indicates the precautionary statement is not appropriate in every case and should be used only in certain circumstances. In these cases, conditions for use explaining when the text should be used are given in column (5) of the tables.”.

23. This proposal was supported in principle by the Sub-Committee, so no further work has taken place on this issue, though it will be addressed in the revised formal proposals that will be provided for consideration at the forty-second session.

P373 “DO NOT fight fire when fire reaches explosives” for self-reactive substances and mixtures Type A and organic peroxides Type A:

24. As previously detailed in paragraphs 36 to 40 of 2021/1, the group had identified an issue regarding self-reactive substances and mixtures Type A and organic peroxides Type A that are listed under P373. However, inclusion of these hazard classes/categories under P373 could be considered as misleading/inaccurate as they are not explosives, though may have explosive characteristics. At the fortieth session, the Sub-Committee concluded that this issue needed further consideration.

25. Following the feedback from the Sub-Committee, a sub-group of mainly physical hazards and explosives experts considered the options in the context of the following information on Type A self-reactive substances and mixtures Type A and organic peroxides:

- These substances are forbidden to be transported and consequently are not commercialized;
- Although a Type A product of these hazard classes may occur in a manufacturing step, such steps all take place within safe manufacturing installations (processes in bunkers and/or respecting safety distances required and many other dedicated process related safety measures);
- Storage of Type A organic peroxides (if it is done at all) is not common practice, though very small quantities may be stored and used for research purposes and would be done so in accordance with appropriate requirements;
- There has been no known issues in relation to these substances being listed under P373.

26. Consequently, the sub-group concluded that although P373 may not be ideal, overall, it would be best to retain the status quo for self-reactive substances and mixtures Type A and organic peroxides Type A under P373. This view was supported by the rest of the working group who agreed not to take this issue any further forward at this stage.

27. However, if the Sub-Committee considered that Type A self-reactive substances and mixtures and Type A organic peroxides should be separated from explosives that are also currently listed under P373, the group could explore the potential options and would involve including consideration by the Explosives Working Group.

Inconsistencies identified in Table A3.2.3 of Section 2

28. As previously detailed in paragraphs 41 to 42 of 2021/1, the group had identified an inconsistency between the combination statement: **P302+P335+P334 “IF ON SKIN: Brush off loose particles from skin. Immerse in cool water [or wrap in wet bandages].”** provided in Table A3.2.3 with that provided in the matrix table for substances and mixtures which, in contact with water, emit flammable gases, 1-2.

29. The group had proposed to remove the inconsistency by amending the combination statement in Table A3.2.3 which was supported in principle by the Sub-Committee, so no further work has been undertaken on this issue which will be addressed in the revised formal proposals for consideration at the forty-second session.

II. Amendments to sections 2 and 3 of Annex 3 - update on progress of issues

P354 “Immediately rinse with water for several minutes”

30 As previously detailed in paragraphs 10 to 16 of 2021/2, the group had identified an ambiguity in P354 “Immediately rinse with water for several minutes.” in relation to skin corrosion (Categories 1, 1A, 1B, 1C) when this precautionary statement is used in combination **P302+P361+P354 “IF ON SKIN: Take off immediately all contaminated clothing. Immediately rinse with water for several minutes.”** as it is not clear whether contaminated clothing should be removed before, during, or after rinsing. Additionally, it is not clear that rinsing for several minutes is sufficient. At the fortieth session, the Sub-Committee concluded that this issue needed more consideration.

31. Following the feedback from the Sub-Committee, in July 2021 the group undertook further reflection regarding the priority of response actions (e.g. rinsing while removing the clothes instead of removing the clothes and rinsing immediately afterwards) and endeavoured to take a more holistic approach to reviewing the combined statement.

32. However, the group still could not reach a consensus on the issue and to help resolve this, a member from the United States volunteered to provide a further thought starter to assist the discussions on this issue with the view of agreeing a way forward and taking a formal proposal to the Sub-Committee for consideration at the forty-second session.

Respiratory sensitizers and acute toxicity issues in Annex 3:

33. In July, a new thought starter on issues involving respiratory sensitizers and acute toxicity precautionary statements in Annex 3 (work items 3 and 5 on the groups work plan⁶) was produced and circulated to the group for consideration.

34. This paper stimulated a lot of discussion within the group. Unfortunately, neither of these issues has been able to be progressed much in recent months due to various reasons, most notably resources. However, in a separate informal document provided by the group for the forty-first session, the group has outlined general challenges and the current status of the respiratory sensitizer issues and invites the Sub-Committee views on these issues.

35. The group aims to resolve the outstanding issues for both the combination statements and respiratory sensitization early next year with the view of providing formal proposals for the consideration of the Sub-Committee at the forty-second session.

Action requested from the Sub-Committee

36. The working group will continue progressing its work via correspondence and virtual meetings, where necessary.

37. Although the work on the combinations statement proposals outlined in this document are still under discussion within the informal working group, the Sub-

⁶ see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/78 and informal document INF.21 (39th session)

Committee is invited to note and provide initial views on any of the issues outlined in this document, particularly those contained within:

- H315 + H320: as provided in paragraphs 11 to 16 above;
 - Variations in the text of combined hazard statements and combined precautionary statements: as provided in paragraphs 17 to 21 above.
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