Hazard Classification

Classifying chemical hazards is the starting point for hazard communication.

The classification process uses defined criteria to assign a hazard or danger category to chemicals and mixtures. The categories are:

- **Physical hazards**

  Physical hazards include:
  Explosives, flammable gases, flammable aerosols, oxidizers, gases under pressure, flammable liquids and solids, self-reactive or unstable chemicals, pyrophoric liquids and solids, self-heating chemicals, etc. For more information, see Appendix B to 29 CFR 1910.1200

- **Health hazards**

  Health hazards include:
  Acute toxicity, skin corrosion/irritation, serious eye damage/irritation, respiratory or skin sensitization, carcinogenicity and mutagenicity, reproductive toxicity, etc. For more information, see Appendix A to 29 CFR 1910.1200

- **Environmental hazards**

  Environmental hazards
  are hazardous to the aquatic environment.

- **Mixtures**
  A tier approach is used for the classification of mixtures.

Important Note: The familiar NFPA diamond warning label uses numbers to rank the severity of the health, fire and reactivity hazards of chemicals. The NFPA numbering system goes from 1 to 4 - with 1 being the least severe and 4 being the most severe hazard.

The new OSHA globally harmonized system reverses the severity numbers. In the GHS system, the number 1 indicates the most severe hazard, while the number 4 represents the least severe hazard. You may see both hazard rating systems on the new safety data sheets (SDS).