

## Preview of CLP Briefing Note: Classification of substances

### Classification: what's it all about?

Classification and labelling has been part of EU law for more years than most of us have worked, and it has gone through many step changes. We are used to the hazard warning labels found on sodium carbonate (soda) and some other household chemicals, but we know we don't find these labels on all domestic cleaning products. That's because sodium carbonate has a measurable effect in terms of eye damage – in other words it's classified as hazardous. Common salt (sodium chloride) makes your eyes sting but does not have a strong enough effect to damage your eyes – it's not classified as hazardous.

This sorting of chemicals into those of concern (hazardous) and those we can be relatively relaxed about is known as classification and it can only be done with some information about the properties of a chemical. Through REACH, more information will become available for classification but in the meantime for many chemicals the classification for health and environmental effects is done on the basis of the data which is available – and this includes consideration of similar chemicals or chemicals of the same group. This leads us into the stepwise procedure of classification; but first we need to remember that all this has been going on for a long time and maybe someone has done the job before!

### The health warning

The CLP Regulation is one of the largest EU regulatory texts. It can easily overwhelm even the most dedicated health and safety professional. In addition, the official ECHA Guidance weighs in at some 600+ pages – not for the fainthearted! But you should have both of these documents (and make sure they are up to date) to hand if you embark on the task of classification – see:

[http://echa.europa.eu/legislation/classification\\_legislation\\_en.asp](http://echa.europa.eu/legislation/classification_legislation_en.asp) and  
[http://guidance.echa.europa.eu/docs/guidance\\_document/clp\\_en.pdf](http://guidance.echa.europa.eu/docs/guidance_document/clp_en.pdf)

We can't claim to reduce the complexity of classification to just a few pages. Don't be tempted to try this yourself unless you are confident of your ability – and are ready to defend it in court if challenged. In this Briefing Note we hope to show you how to get started and to identify what you can do yourself and when you need to get expert help. But don't forget – for REACHReady's Gold subscribers the first port of call for help is our Helpdesk – only an e-mail ([enquiries@reachready.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@reachready.co.uk)) or phone call away (+44 (0)207 901 1444).

### Useful shortcuts to classification

#### Annex VI

For many hundreds of substances EU Government experts have agreed the classification and these have been made legally binding. In the past these agreements were accumulated into Annex I of the Dangerous Substances Directive...

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