Introduction to Hazardous Communication: An Employee’s Right to Know

Why me?
In order to meet state and federal requirements, as well as University policy, mandatory training on Hazardous Communication: An Employee’s Right to Know is being implemented for all University employees. This includes faculty, staff and student employees.

Why now?
The Hazard Communication Standard initially provided workers the ‘right to know’ about the hazardous chemicals in the workplace. Now changes to this OSHA standard incorporates the Global Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS), which will give workers the ‘right to understand’ by providing workers a standardized classification of chemicals based upon their health and physical hazards. To facilitate the worker’s understanding of the new standard, each employee must be trained or re-trained on the new elements of the label and safety data sheet format, while still covering all the required information of the initial OSHA Hazard Communication Standard.

Why annual retraining?
The initial Hazard Communication Standard required training for all new employees and whenever a new physical or health hazard was introduced in the work area. With the continued growth of the student population and the evolving research interests, physical and health hazards are continuously changing on campus. All hazard notification signage will be updated to include GHS requirements as they are implemented.

Why required on UA campus?
While Alabama is not a “state plan” state, we as a University are subject to ADEM, EPA and other regulatory agencies that share administration and enforcement of the community right-to-know rules, including training, SDS and labeling requirements. At any point an employer can meet or exceed the mandated guidelines recognized in the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard. For example, the University of Alabama requires all chemicals, regardless of size or quantity, to be labeled. Warning labels affixed by the chemical manufacturers provide the chemical users information about the contained chemical, its properties and precautions for handling the chemical. When chemicals are placed in secondary containers (including small quantities of chemicals in spray bottles), the person transferring the chemical must provide the following information in English on the secondary container: the full name and identity of the chemical, applicable hazard warnings and the contact information for the appropriate party responsible for the chemical or the name and address for the manufacturer of the chemical. All containers must be labeled with this required information. It is unacceptable to neglect this step and/or eliminate this information from any container, including secondary containers.

Who can I contact if I have questions about my assignments for online safety courses?
Contact Christy Herron or Marcy Huey at Environmental Health & Safety (205-348-5905).