



ASEAN Guidelines on Product Safety Labelling



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ASEAN Product Safety Labelling Guidelines

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967.

The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

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ASEAN Product Safety Labelling Guidelines

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The ASEAN Secretariat

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The Eight Principles of Product Safety Labelling

The ASEAN Guidelines on Product Safety Labelling provide a comprehensive framework to harmonise safety labelling practices across ASEAN Member States (AMS). These guidelines are summarised through eight principles to form the foundation of effective labelling:

1. **Clear and Recognisable Symbols:** Universal symbols enable quick comprehension of hazards and instructions, overcoming linguistic and literacy barriers.
2. **Clear and Accurate Information:** Labels provide essential details about the product's use, storage, and disposal in a truthful, clear, and concise manner.
3. **Safety Advice:** Prominently highlights risks, hazards and warnings using text and visuals to alert users and prevent misuse.
4. **Mitigation Instructions:** Provide actionable steps to reduce risks and ensure safe use, including emergency responses.
5. **Durable Labelling:** Labels must remain intact and legible throughout the product's lifecycle, even under challenging conditions.
6. **Consistency and Standardisation:** Harmonised labelling reduces confusion, improves compliance, and facilitates trade within ASEAN.
7. **Localisation and Cultural Relevance:** Adapt labels to the linguistic, cultural, and regulatory contexts of each ASEAN Member State to ensure accessibility and relevance.
8. **Other Key Information:** Supplementary details, if applicable, such as expiry dates, manufacturer contact information, importer details, and compliance certifications promote transparency and traceability.

These principles are designed to protect consumers, build trust, and promote the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community.

Introduction

Background

Product safety labelling plays a critical role in protecting consumers by providing essential information about safe product use, handling, and disposal. It minimises risks associated with misuse, promotes informed decision-making, and fosters consumer trust in safety and quality. Labelling is used where hazards cannot be designed out of products: it is an important risk mitigation measure. It may include warnings, instructions, constituent parts, and other critical details to prevent misuse and potential hazards. Effective product safety labelling is integral to preventing incidents and ensuring products are used as intended.

Labelling should ensure consumers have easy access to accurate and relevant information in a way that they can easily understand. This helps prevent incidents and health issues caused by improper use or exposure to harmful substances.

ASEAN is a culturally and linguistically diverse region. This diversity requires harmonised safety labelling practices that align with international best practices while addressing the specific needs of the region. By establishing consistent labelling wherever goods are sold, people will be protected, fair trade promoted, and regional economic integration strengthened.

The foundation for these guidelines is provided by globally recognised frameworks, by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), United Nations (UN), including the World Health Organization (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Purpose

1. **Enhance Consumer Safety:** Provide clear, actionable information to ensure safe product use and prevent incidents.
2. **Promote and Support Future Regional Harmonisation:** Establish consistent labelling standards across ASEAN to reduce regulatory fragmentation and streamline trade.
3. **Support Trade and Economic Growth:** Align ASEAN labelling practices with international norms to improve market access for products manufactured in the region.
4. **Build Consumer Trust:** Offer transparent and reliable safety information, enhancing confidence in ASEAN-manufactured goods.

Scope

These Guidelines are intended to apply to all categories of products. They serve as a reference for baseline requirements, particularly for products not governed by specific regulatory frameworks. They are intended to complement, and not override, existing sector-specific regulations. Existing ASEAN Frameworks or Agreements (e.g. ASEAN Guidelines on Labelling Requirements for Health Supplements and Traditional Medicine) take precedence over these Guidelines.

Some product categories have internationally accepted definitions, while others do not. National legislation may describe product categories differently or include items under different categories. The examples given here are common to many member states but not necessarily all. Examples are given here only to illustrate the scope of products covered by these Guidelines and to aid national reviews of safety labelling requirements.

For these Guidelines, relevant products include, but are not limited to, those in the table below. More detail is given in Annex B.

Consumer Goods	e.g. electronics, toys, household products, textiles, and cosmetics.
Industrial Equipment	e.g. tools, machinery, and workplace safety equipment.
Hazardous Substances	e.g. chemicals, cleaning agents, pesticides, and flammable materials.
Health-related Products	e.g. food, drugs, herbal medicines, health supplements, medical devices, PPEs, and health tech wearable devices.

High-risk products require more stringent labelling requirements due to their potential to cause severe harm. Such products are typically governed by sector-specific regulations and often involve complex hazards. As such, they necessitate clear warnings, detailed usage instructions, and emergency response guidance.

Product Safety Labelling Principles

The Eight Principles of the ASEAN Product Safety Labelling are the foundation for designing and implementing product safety labels across the region. They provide a structured and harmonised approach to ensure consumers receive critical safety information in a manner that is accessible, accurate, and actionable. Each principle addresses unique aspects of safety labelling, reflecting international best practices and considers the diversity and specific needs of the ASEAN region.

1. Clear and Recognisable Symbols

Symbols are vital for quickly conveying safety information, particularly in a region as linguistically diverse as ASEAN. Visual elements eliminate the reliance on text, making hazard warnings and required actions accessible to users regardless of their language proficiency or literacy level. Recognisable symbols also enable users to identify risks immediately, which is especially important in time-sensitive or hazardous situations. Effective symbols improve comprehension, reduce incidents, and ensure that safety messages transcend cultural and linguistic barriers.

Key Considerations

- Use international standards: Adopt globally recognised symbols, such as those specified in ISO 7010, ISO 3864, the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) and in CEN ISO/TR 8124-8:2024 - Safety of Toys Age Determination, ISO 20417:2021, and ISO 15223-1:2021.
- High visibility: Employ high-contrast colours, such as red for danger, yellow for caution, and green for safety.
- Appropriate size and placement: Position symbols prominently near the relevant hazard or instruction, ensuring they are legible from a reasonable distance.

Implementation Example

A flammable icon with a red outline should be displayed on aerosol cans



following GHS principles for flammable aerosol (cat 1 and 2)

A red circle with a line through and child 0-3 on a toy not suitable for a child under 3 months old.



following CEN ISO/TR 8124-8:2024 - Safety of Toys Age Determination and EN71-6 -Graphical symbol for age warning labelling

2. Clear and Accurate Information

Clear and accurate information is fundamental for effective labelling. While symbols provide quick recognition, text-based information ensures users understand the specific risks, safe handling practices, and proper disposal methods.

Ambiguous or overly technical language can lead to misuse, incidents, and regulatory non-compliance. Accurate and concise information instils consumer confidence, reduces liability for manufacturers, and ensures compliance with regional and international safety standards.

Key Considerations

- Provide essential details: Include product name, intended use, instructions for use, warnings and hazard information, storage requirements, and disposal instructions. Even if sold together, units intended for separate storage and use should be fully labelled, so the end user is fully informed.
- Use plain language: Avoid jargon and complex terminology: write in simple, clear terms that are easily understood by the public and do not downplay the risk.
- Logical sequencing: Present information in a logical order, prioritising critical warnings and instructions.

Implementation Example

A cleaning product label to state:

“Use in a well-ventilated area. Store in a cool, dry place. Keep out of reach of children.”



3. Safety Advice

Safety advice is essential for drawing attention to potential risks associated with a product. They alert users to hazards and encourage preventive actions, ensuring safety during use, handling, storage or disposal. Without effective warnings, users may unknowingly expose themselves or others to harm.

Safety Advice should focus on brevity and impact, using clear language and visuals to deliver a concise yet powerful safety message.

Key Considerations

- Signal severity: Use signal words such as “DANGER,” “WARNING,” or “CAUTION” to indicate the level of risk, following ISO 3864 standards.
- Combine text and visuals: Pair warning text with hazard-specific icons to reinforce understanding.
- Prominent placement: Position warnings at the top of the label or near the hazard area to maximise visibility.
- Colour coding: Use colours that correspond to the level of risk (e.g., red for danger, yellow for caution, following ISO 22324: 2022 Security and Resilience).

Implementation Example

A pesticide label to display:

“WARNING: Corrosive. Avoid contact with skin and eyes”



4. Mitigation Instructions

Mitigation instructions empower users to handle products safely and respond appropriately in emergencies. These instructions go beyond warnings by providing actionable steps to minimise risks and ensure safe use.

Effective mitigation guidance is particularly important for hazardous or technical products, where improper use can lead to serious harm. Clear, appropriately detailed instructions help users comply with safety requirements, protect themselves and others, and prevent environmental damage.

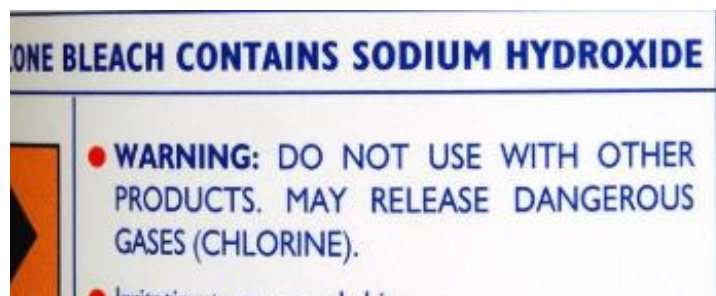
Key Considerations

- Provide step-by-step guidance: Include clear, sequential instructions for handling, storage, and disposal.
- Illustrate complex actions: Use diagrams or illustrations to support written instructions for tasks that may be difficult to understand.
- Emergency response information: Detail first-aid measures and emergency actions in case of accidental exposure or misuse.
- Tailor to the product: Ensure instructions are specific to the product's nature, risks, and typical usage scenarios.

Implementation Example

Household bleach bottle safety label to include:

"Do not mix with other chemicals"



Stepladder safety label to include clear illustration to highlight basic instructions and additional text for additional cautions.

5. Durable Labelling

Appropriately durable labelling ensures that safety information remains legible and intact throughout the product's lifecycle, regardless of environmental or operational conditions. Labels that fade, peel, or become illegible compromise consumer safety and regulatory compliance.

Durability is particularly critical for long-life products, hazardous materials, and items exposed to challenging conditions, such as moisture, heat, or abrasion. Durable labelling protects users by ensuring that essential information is always available.

Key Considerations

- Material durability and indelibility: Use appropriately water-resistant, heat-resistant, chemical and abrasion-resistant materials for labels, considering print stability and ink compatibility.
- Secure attachment: Ensure labels are firmly affixed to the product and resistant to peeling or detachment under reasonably foreseeable circumstances.
- Legibility testing: Test labels under anticipated environmental conditions to ensure they remain readable.

Implementation Example

A label on outdoor machinery may need to be printed on abrasion-resistant and UV-resistant material to prevent damage and fading from sun exposure.



6. Consistency and Standardisation

Consistency and standardisation in labelling practices reduce confusion for consumers and facilitate trade, including among ASEAN Member States. A harmonised approach ensures that labels convey safety information in a predictable, recognisable format, enabling consumers to quickly identify and understand risks across products and markets.

Standardisation also simplifies compliance for manufacturers, ensuring alignment with both regional and international regulatory requirements.

Key Considerations

- Use standard layouts: Adopt uniform templates for labels, with designated sections for warnings, instructions, and symbols.
- Align with ASEAN agreements: Follow regional standards and templates to ensure consistency across ASEAN Member States.
- Incorporate international norms: Align with global standards such as the UN Globally Harmonised System (GHS) for chemical labelling.

Implementation Example

An electronic device sold in multiple ASEAN Member States should use the same label format for safety warnings, with translations provided in the appropriate languages.



7. Localisation and Cultural Relevance

Localisation ensures that labels are tailored to the linguistic, cultural, and regulatory contexts of individual ASEAN Member States. A one-size-fits-all approach may result in misinterpretation or cultural insensitivity, undermining the label's effectiveness, as well as risking harmful incidents. By adapting labels to local norms, manufacturers and importers can ensure that safety information is relevant, accessible, and comprehensible to target audiences.

Key Considerations

- Translate effectively: Translate labels into all official languages of the ASEAN Member States where the product is sold. Consider also using English, as a widely used common language.
- Respect cultural sensitivities: Avoid using symbols, colours, or imagery that may carry unintended meanings in specific cultures.
- Adapt messaging: Tailor safety messages to align with local norms and behaviours, ensuring they resonate with consumers.

Implementation Example

A toy for sale in Finland must be labelled in Finnish and Swedish-the two official languages of the country.



8. Other Key Information

Supplementary information enhances transparency and ensures traceability, supporting both consumer confidence and regulatory oversight. Details such as expiry dates, manufacturer and/or import contact information, and compliance certifications provide users with critical context about the product's safety through its lifecycle and traceability in the event of incidents.

This information is particularly important for products with limited shelf lives, complex usage requirements, or high safety risks.

Key Considerations

- Expiry/Retest and manufacturing dates: Clearly display dates in a standardised format, such as DD/MM/YYYY. Consider supplementing with an explanation of the date format or abbreviating the month in letters.
- Lot number: Provide unique lot number to a batch of products which can be used for tracking along the manufacturing process and identifying defective products.
- Notification/Registration number: Display notification/registration number if required by local regulation.
- Manufacturer, importer and distributor details: Provide contact information for reporting issues or obtaining additional guidance.
- Compliance certifications: Include logos or statements indicating conformity with relevant standards (e.g. ISO, HACCP), where justified by Certifications issued by the appropriate certifying body.

Implementation Example

A product label including lot number and manufacturing and expiry dates.





Application of the Principles

The ASEAN Guidelines on Product Safety Labelling are designed primarily for consumer goods, which present a wide variety of safety risks. The principles outlined are, however, versatile and can be applied to other product categories such as hazardous substances, industrial equipment, and health-related products, ensuring that safety standards remain robust and adaptable across industries.

Core Components of Effective Labelling

Effective labelling combines key elements to ensure that safety information is clear, accessible, and actionable. These components allow users to understand and act on the information provided, regardless of the product's complexity.

The lifecycle of a product involves distinct stages where labelling plays a crucial role. Pre-market responsibilities focus on ensuring that labels meet regulatory standards before the product is distributed, while post-market responsibilities involve monitoring the labelling of products on sale to address emerging risks or changes in regulations.

Pre-market Requirements

- **Design and Testing:** Clear labels must be developed that follow these Guidelines, comply with regulatory requirements and are appropriately tested for durability.
- **Risk Communication:** Include warnings and instructions specific to the product's identified hazards.
- **Approval Processes:** Regulatory requirements for labelling must be clearly communicated by regulatory bodies. Where pre-market approval is required, labels to be submitted to the corresponding authority during product registration or certification. Any changes or additional label with new materials, information or design must also be approved by the corresponding authority before circulation.

Post-market Requirements

- **Monitoring:** All products on sale must have current, accurate, and locally compliant labels. Imported products must have current, accurate, and locally compliant labels before distribution and retail. Ongoing monitoring is required to check that labels remain product's lifecycle.
- **Updates:** Labels must be revised to reflect new risks, improved safety measures, regulatory changes, or in response to complaint about legibility and durability.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** There must be a channel for consumers to report unclear or damaged labels.

Implementation of Product Safety Labelling

The successful implementation of these Guidelines relies on collaboration among all stakeholders, including governments, manufacturers, importers, retailers, and consumers. Each party plays a critical role in ensuring that labelling practices are applied consistently and effectively.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders

The implementation of product safety labelling requires cooperation across the supply chain, from the initial design of labels to their application in the market. Each stakeholder has specific responsibilities that collectively ensure consumer safety and compliance. National legislation should specify the responsibilities of specific stakeholders.

Regulators	• Develop safety labelling standards and regulations aligned with these Guidelines. • Provide clear guidance to businesses. • Monitor compliance through inspections and complaint or incident handling and enforce corrective actions.
Manufacturers	• Design and apply labels that meet national standards and regulations, including accuracy, clarity and durability. • Design and apply labels that meet regional, and international standards and regulations, as required. • Ensure a channel is established to receive complaints about labelling from distributors and importers, and as appropriate directly from consumers. Take appropriate corrective actions, including that safety issues are acted on throughout their product supply chain.
Importers	• Verify compliance with national labelling standards and regulations, including clarity and testing for durability, before products are sold. • May add/over label to achieve compliance if permitted, ensuring accuracy, clarity and durability. • Monitor compliance. • Ensure that non-compliant products are reported and removed from the market. • Ensure a channel is established to receive complaints from their distributors, take appropriate corrective actions and report through the supply chain to the manufacturer and/or other distributors if appropriate.

Distributors	• Verify compliance with national labelling standards and regulations before products are sold. • Monitor compliance. • Ensure that non-compliant products are reported and removed from the market. • Ensure a channel is established to receive complaints from retailers, take appropriate corrective actions and report through the supply chain to the importer or manufacturer.
Retailers	• Verify that labels comply with national labelling standards and regulation before products are sold. • Ensure that all products for sale have intact and completely visible and legible labels. • Monitor compliance. • Ensure that adulterated, contaminated or expired products are removed from shelves and not made available for sale to consumers. • Assist consumers in interpreting safety information if needed. • Ensure a channel is established to receive complaints from consumers, take appropriate corrective action and report through the supply chain to distributors or directly to the manufacturer, if appropriate.
Consumers	• Follow the safety instructions provided. • Report unclears, damaged, or missing labels to the retailer and/or manufacturer/importer and the authorities.

Addressing Technological and Market Challenges

As markets evolve and new technologies emerge, safety labelling must adapt to remain effective and relevant. This involves leveraging innovation and addressing sustainability concerns.

- Digital Solutions - QR codes and digital platforms can supplement, rather than replace, physical labels by providing additional safety information in multiple languages.
- Sustainability - use environmentally friendly labelling materials without compromising durability.
- Advanced Technologies - future applications of augmented reality (AR) for interactive labelling and enhanced user engagement.

Harmonisation

Harmonisation fosters a unified framework, ensuring consistency in labelling practices across international borders. It reduces redundancies, enhances trust in regional products, and supports the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community. Achieving harmonisation requires phased implementation and collaboration among ASEAN Member States alongside robust capacity-building measures.

The ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection (ACCP) will develop standardised, sector-specific template formats to promote uniformity across the ASEAN region. This harmonisation will be achieved through stakeholder engagement, involving consumer groups, and industry representatives.

Annex A: Glossary of Terms and Definitions

CAUTION	Signal word used to indicate a potentially hazardous situation which, if not avoided, could result in minor or moderate injury. <i>(Source: ISO 17724)</i>
DANGER	Signal word used to indicate an imminently hazardous situation which, if not avoided, will result in serious injury or death. <i>(Source: ISO 17724)</i>
Hazard	Source of potential harm. <i>(Source: ISO/IEC Guide 51)</i> The term hazard is generally qualified to define its origin or the nature of the expected harm (e.g., electric shock hazard, crushing hazard, cutting hazard, toxic hazard, fire hazard, drowning hazard)
Risk	Combination of the probability of occurrence of harm and the severity of that harm. <i>(Source: ISO/IEC Guide 51)</i>
WARNING	Signal word used to indicate a potentially hazardous situation which, if not avoided, could result in serious injury or death <i>(Source: OSHA/ANSI Z35.1)</i>

ANNEX B: Examples of goods in different categories

National legislation may describe product categories differently or include items under different categories. Some categories have internationally accepted definitions, while others do not. The examples given here are common to many member states but not necessarily all. Examples are given here only to illustrate the scope of products covered by these Guidelines and aid national review of safety labelling requirements.

Categories of goods	Non-exhaustive list of examples of goods in the category, unless regulated differently under national law.
Consumer Goods	Electronics, toys, childcare articles, such as feeding bottles, teething aids, household products, textiles, cooking utensils, furniture and soft furnishings, finished leather goods, clothing and footwear, ornaments and hobby and art materials, household electrical items such as refrigerators, rice cookers, light fittings and air conditioning units, household electronic items such as computers and mobile phones, sports and recreation equipment such as bicycles, watches, cosmetics, stationery.
Industrial Equipment	Tools, machinery, workplace safety equipment, laboratory equipment, industrial electrical cabling, prime movers such as steam engines and turbines, internal combustion engines and gas engines and turbines; steam generators such as boiler; furnaces; heat exchanger such as cooling towers, kilns and dryers coolers and heaters; materials handling equipment, such as pumps, cranes, conveyors, hoists, elevators, escalators, mechanized dumbwaiters, moving ramps and walkways: heating, air-conditioning, ventilating, and refrigeration equipment and machinery, including compressors and centrifugal fans, mechanical pollution abatement and environmental control systems; fired and unfired pressure vessels, printing machines; mechanical working machines for metallic and non-metallic materials.
Hazardous Substances	Chemicals which are toxic, corrosive, irritant, strong sensitisers, flammable or combustible or generates pressure through decomposition, heat or other means, such as cleaning agents, pesticides, flammable materials, radioactive substances.
Health-related products	Health related products: food, drugs, herbal medicines, health supplements, medical devices, PPEs, and health tech wearable devices.

