

Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

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We have to ensure compliance with The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulation 2002 and establish effective arrangements to prevent or adequately control exposures to hazardous substances. Employers shall not expose employees and other persons (pupils, service users etc.) to substances hazardous to health unless an assessment of the risks to the health has been carried out to determine the steps that are needed to prevent or adequately control exposures.

What are COSHH products?

These substances could be dusts, gases or fumes that you breathe in, or liquids, gels or powders that come into contact with your eyes or skin. There could also be harmful micro-organisms present that can cause infection, an allergic reaction or are toxic.

Examples of hazardous substances include:

- Chemicals e.g. cleaning agents
- Dusts / Mists e.g. flour dust
- Gases e.g. butane
- Fumes e.g. glue, paint
- Liquids e.g. Petrol, blood



Ill health caused by these substances used at work is preventable. Many substances can cause asthma or other diseases, including cancer. Many can damage the skin, and some can cause serious long-term damage to the lungs but, used properly, they almost never do.

The effect can be immediate, such as dizziness or stinging eyes, or can take many years to develop, such as lung disease. Many of the long-term or chronic effects cannot be cured once they develop.

What you have to do:

You can prevent or reduce workers exposure to hazardous substances by:

- finding out what the health hazards are
- deciding how to prevent harm to health (by completing Risk Assessments)
- providing control measures to reduce harm to health
- making sure they are used
- keeping all control measures in good working order
- providing information, instruction and training for workers and others
- providing monitoring and health surveillance in appropriate cases
- planning for emergencies

To ensure a full COSHH process is undertaken 3 documents are required, these are -

1. Operational Risk Assessment

This is looking at the whole task/operation to identify all hazards and risks, if the task involves the use of a hazardous substance, this is where you identify what substance you are going to use and what control measures are needed i.e. to develop a COSHH assessment for using this substance.

2. Safety Data Sheet (SDS)

This is produced and supplied by the manufacturers of hazardous substances. It contains important information about the substance i.e. the hazards it poses, how to transport it, store it, use it, mix it, dispose of it and what emergency or first aid action is required. However, this is NOT a COSHH assessment.

3. COSHH Assessment

Now you have completed the Operational RA and have the SDS for the substance being used, you can now develop a specific COSHH assessment for using this substance.

A COSHH assessment is produced by using the Safety Data Sheet that belongs to the product. We can then create the COSHH assessment to reduce risk in relation to the use and storage of a particular product or substance and should contain the following:

- Name of product and what it is used for
- How product is applied e.g. sprayed, poured, diluted
- Details of how products can cause harm
- Details of control measures used to reduce risks to an acceptable level e.g. Storage and PPE
- Details of how first aid is to be administered if product is ingested, inhaled, or comes into contact with eyes or skin, for example
- How the product is stored and disposed of
- What firefighting mediums can be used for example water, foam

Anything showing these symbols, need to have a COSHH assessment:



Explosive



Flammable



Oxidising



Corrosive



Acute toxicity



Hazardous to
the environment



Serious Health
Hazard



Health
Hazard



Gas under pressure

Further Information

Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) - HSE](#)

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)

[Health and Safety for Schools Webpage](#)

Contacts

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