

Estates Department



CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH

**C.O.S.H.H.**  
**Policy & Guidance**

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## INTRODUCTION

The COSHH Regulations places a duty on employers to manage hazardous substances in the workplace.

The School risk assessment process provides a legal framework to protect people who could be exposed to hazardous substances.

*Hazardous substances can come in many forms, e.g.:*

- Chemicals such as acids, solvents and oils, etc.
- Fumes from paint, soldering, etc.
- Dusts from wood machining, cement, etc.
- Micro-organisms, viruses and bacteria.

*They can enter the body through various routes:*

- Inhalation
- Ingestion
- Injection
- Skin absorption
- Through the mucous membrane in the eyes

*They can cause ill-health, e.g.:*

*Short term* effects can include:

- Skin or eye irritation
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Unconsciousness
- ...or even death.

*Long term* effects can include:

- Cancer
- Lung disease, e.g. asthma
- Liver/kidney dysfunction
- Skin disease, e.g. dermatitis
- ...or even death.

## **POLICY**

The Trust requires COSHH assessments to be undertaken by managers, in conjunction with employees who may be using and/or are likely to come into contact with hazardous substances.

The Risk Assessment process is designed to be a simple and straightforward procedure to ensure continuous improvement and raise overall standards of occupational health and safety.

Accordingly, managers will:

- Carry out COSHH assessments of any hazardous substances and provide general protection in preference to personal protection (Personal Protective Equipment - PPE)
- Ensure that employees adhere to this Policy and provide Health Surveillance where it is applicable
- Ensure that adequate resources, management, maintenance, training and information systems are in place

Employee's duties are:

- To adhere to any reasonable instructions, etc.
- To ensure their own and/or other people's health and safety is not put at risk by their acts or omissions.
- To ensure that they inform management as soon as it is practicable to do so in cases of serious and imminent danger and where general unsafe conditions exist in the workplace.

## **GUIDANCE**

### **Step1. - identifying hazardous substances**

Find out what you have and/or are likely to come into contact with in your workplace, and make an inventory of all hazardous substances that are either stored, used or produced or likely to be interfaced with.

These can usually be identified by the labels on containers and packages which will state whether the substances are very toxic; toxic, corrosive; harmful or irritant.

Additionally, for hazardous chemicals etc. that are natural, e.g. toxic plants, there are no labels attached. The nature of the hazard will have to be identified via the corporate risk assessment process.

Information can also be found in the Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) - **but, please note that these are not a substitute for a COSHH Assessment, merely reference material.**

If there are no sheets available, then contact the supplier as they have a legal duty to provide you with this information (Section 6, Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974).

Further information can be found in HSE information sheets and guidance notes, as well as the HSE's document, EH40 Occupational Exposure Limits.

### **Step 2. - how are the substances used/interfaced with?**

Examine the work process:

- How are they delivered and stored?
- How are they prepared and used?
- How often are they used?
- Is exposure likely?
- How do you dispose of any residues and containers?

### **Step 3. - what are the risks of injury and ill-health?**

Make a judgement on whether any person (including members of the public) could suffer any ill-health or injury from:

- Spillages and splashes
- Breathing dusts and vapours
- Mixing incompatible substances
- Absorption through the skin (or eyes)
- Contact with the substance / accidental ingestion

*You should now decide whether the existing and potential exposure poses any significant risk - if the answer is "no"- then you have done enough.*

*If the answer is "yes"- then carry on...*

### **Step 4. - how do you control the risk?**

Can you (in order of priority):

- Eliminate the hazard
- Substitute for a less hazardous substance (or dilute it)
- Contain the hazard - by isolating; enclosing or extraction\*
- Introduce and enforce a safe system of work
- Provide adequate supervision
- Provide Health Surveillance where necessary
- Use suitable Personal Protective Equipment - (last resort!)?

\*All extraction systems must be maintained and tested periodically

### **Step 5. - record & review your findings**

Unless the assessment is simple and can be explained easily, then it should be recorded (see attached).

The COSHH Assessment should identify who is at risk and why, and what precautions and preventative measures are in place to reduce the risk to an adequate level.

It must decide when and what needs reviewing to maintain validity, and if any influencing situations change, then a new assessment must be carried out.

**Step 6. - reality checks**

Managers must carry out regular inspections to ensure that hazardous substances are being properly used, stored and disposed of, and that the COSHH Assessments are being adhered to.

**C.O.S.H.H.  
PRODUCT  
SAFETY DATA  
SHEETS**





## COSHH Assessment Form 2.

### Actions to be taken to improve control measures

Details of further actions	Who?	By when?	Done ✓



## **Additional information**

### **1. Mixing substances**

Never mix substances yourself unless you are specially trained to do so and you have authority from your supervisor/line manager. Take additional care when using a number of substances together or if you suspect that other substances are present.

### **2. Ventilation**

Ensure adequate ventilation is available at all times

### **3. Smoking/Eating**

Do not smoke or eat when handling any substances used at work

### **4. Use of substances**

Do not bring into work any substances from home - only use ones that are provided for use by the employer.

### **5. Warning!**

Should an employee have any unusual effects whilst using a substance at work or at a later date, they must inform their supervisor/line manager at the earliest opportunity.

Additionally, an employee must inform their supervisor/line manager of any emergencies; near-misses or changes in the work environment at the earliest opportunity.

### **6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

All PPE must be suitable and sufficient with adequate training provided where necessary. It must also be maintained and properly stored.

### **7. Substances not covered by COSHH**

For substances such as asbestos; lead, etc. please refer to specific legislation, etc.

**For further information or advice, please contact the Estates Manager**