

# EC SAFETY SOLUTIONS NEWSLETTER



Topic of the Month – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

July 2024

## Welcome

In this issue of the EC Safety Solutions monthly newsletter, we look at a critical aspect of workplace safety in understanding the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations and managing hazardous substances in the workplace

As always, we hope you find this newsletter useful and welcome any feedback you may have. We would also like to encourage readers to actively contribute to the newsletter by providing company updates or by sharing your good news stories or safety initiatives.

### Introduction:

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) requires employers to adequately control exposure to materials in the workplace that cause ill health. Understanding and complying with COSHH is essential to ensuring a safe and healthy work environment.

Managing exposure to hazardous substances is vital to maintaining a safe workplace. By understanding COSHH regulations and implementing the necessary control measures, we can significantly reduce the risk of ill health caused by harmful substances.

**Stay informed, stay safe, and prioritise health in the workplace.**



### Identifying Harmful Substances

Many materials or substances used or created at work could harm your health. These substances might be:

- **Dusts, gases, or fumes:** Inhaled substances that can affect respiratory health.
- **Liquids, gels, or powders:** Contact with eyes or skin can cause irritation or allergic reactions.
- **Harmful micro-organisms:** Can lead to infections, allergic reactions, or toxicity.

Common harmful substances include paints, cleaning products, wood dust, welding fume, adhesives, fuel such as diesel and petrol, and even bodily fluids. Ill health caused by these substances is preventable. When used properly,

### The Hazards

Exposure to hazardous substances can have severe consequences, including:

- **Asthma or other diseases:** Some substances can cause respiratory issues or diseases like cancer.
- **Skin damage:** Many substances can harm the skin.
- **Long-term lung damage:** Chronic exposure can lead to serious, irreversible lung diseases.
- **Immediate effects:** Symptoms like dizziness or stinging eyes can occur upon exposure.

The effects of exposure can be immediate or take years to develop, making it crucial to manage these substances carefully. To prevent or reduce workers' exposure to hazardous substances, **employers must:**

- **Identify Health Hazards:** Determine what health hazards exist in the workplace.
- **Conduct Risk Assessments:** Assess the risks and decide how to prevent harm.
- **Implement Control Measures:** Provide measures to reduce harm to health.
- **Ensure Proper Use:** Make sure control measures are effectively used.
- **Maintain Control Measures:** Keep all control measures in good working order.
- **Provide Information and Training:** Educate workers and others about the risks and safety measures.
- **Monitor and Surveillance:** Conduct appropriate health surveillance and monitoring.
- **Plan for Emergencies:** Have a plan in place for emergencies involving hazardous substances.

## What can you do to help

### Steps to Identify Hazards:

1. Read product labels and safety data sheets (SDS).
2. Identify harmful substances produced by workplace processes.
3. Consider substances with workplace exposure limits (WELs).

### Assessing the Risks:

1. **Determine** who might be harmed and how.
2. **Consider** how workers are exposed (inhalation, skin contact, ingestion).
3. **Evaluate** the frequency and duration of exposure.
4. **Identify** anyone else who might be exposed, like maintenance workers or visitors.
5. **Review** current control measures and identify further actions needed.

### Controlling the Risks:

1. **Elimination:** Use safer alternatives or change processes to avoid harmful substances.
2. **Containment:** Enclose processes to minimize exposure, use local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems.
3. **Safe Systems of Work:** Restrict access, plan storage and disposal, and ensure proper labelling.
4. **Cleaning:** Use dust-free methods, have procedures for quick and safe spill clean-up.
5. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Use PPE as a last resort, in combination with other identified measures.

### Useful Resources:

- [HSE COSHH Home Page](#)
- [COSHH Regulations 2002](#)
- [Working With Substances Hazardous to Health](#)
- [Approved Code of Practice - COSHH](#)










By following these guidelines, we can maintain a safe and compliant workplace, by protecting everyone's health and well-being.

**Remember:** We can produce COSHH Assessments for you and you can purchase [COSHH Awareness eLearning courses direct from our Website](#)

### EC Safety Solutions Updates:

- 2 x European office compliance visits
- 42 x Construction site inspections
- 12 x Office compliance audits
- 6 x Emergency first aid courses
- 2 x Mental health first aid courses
- 3 x Accident investigations

### What do the COSHH symbols mean?

 Dangerous to the environment	 Toxic	 Gas under pressure
 Corrosive	 Explosive	 Flammable
 Caution – used for less serious health hazards like skin irritation	 Oxidising	 Longer term health hazards such as carcinogenicity

### Information and training:

- Educate workers on risk assessments, hazards, and protective measures.
- Inform workers about exposure monitoring and health surveillance results.
- Train workers to use controls and PPE correctly.
- Ensure contractors are aware of risks and control measures.

### Record and review your findings:

- Record assessments if you have 5 or more employees.
- Regularly review and update risk assessments and controls to ensure effectiveness and account for workplace changes.

### In the News

- [Recycling company fined after exposing workers to wood dust](#)
- [Construction company fined £2.345m after worker drowned in river](#)
- [Company director given suspended sentence after worker crushed to death](#)
- [Company fined £30,000 for unsafe removal of asbestos](#)
- [Tata Chemicals fined £1.1m following man's death](#)

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