



3.2 THE CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)

Policy and Guidance

Using chemicals or other hazardous substances at work can put people's health at risk, so the law requires employers to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill health. The Council as an employer has a legal duty to protect both employees and others who may be exposed by complying with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended).

An employer must not undertake any work that is liable to expose any person to a substance hazardous to health unless a suitable and sufficient assessment has been made of the risks to health created by the substances; also the measures necessary to control exposure to it. Exposure to substances hazardous to health must be prevented, or where this is not reasonably practicable, controlled to a level that won't harm health.

Corporate Group must ensure that they have arrangements in place to assess the risks of using substances hazardous to health in respect of their operations. The assessment must be recorded in an appropriate format, and necessary controls implemented. See Appendix D of the Corporate H&S Manual for an assessment proforma.

Information regarding the safe use of all substances used by Council employees is provided at your designated work place. You must ensure through your Manager or Supervisor that you are aware of the location of this information and that, prior to using any substance, you have read the relevant COSHH Assessment and that you have taken all necessary safety precautions.

As an individual you should be aware of your legal obligations under Section 7 of the Health & Safety At Work (etc) Act 1974, to take reasonable care of your own health & safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do or do not do. And whilst the Council will make every effort to maintain a healthy working environment, and provide you with all information at its disposal, your co-operation is essential to protect your health & safety at work and that of any other person affected by your activities. Your duties and your employer's duties under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended) are statutory obligations and must be complied with.

Substances hazardous to health include any substance or mixture used at work or arising from workplace activities that is harmful to people's health in the form in which it occurs in the work activity, including:

- Substances or mixtures classed as toxic, very toxic, harmful, corrosive or irritant (these can be identified by their warning label and the supplier must provide a safety data sheet for them);

- Substances assigned a Workplace Exposure Limit (these can be identified from Safety Data Sheets and are listed in the HSE publication *EH40*);
- Biological Agents (bacteria and other micro-organisms) if they are directly connected with the work, or if the exposure is incidental to the work (e.g. exposure to bacteria from an air conditioning system that is not properly maintained);
- Any kind of dust if its average concentration in the air exceeds the levels specified in COSHH; and
- Any other substance which creates a risk to health.

To comply with COSHH the Council as an employer has a duty to follow the following steps:

- Assess the risks to health arising from hazardous substances used in or created by workplace activities. Safety Data Sheets are not COSHH assessments, but they provide data to assist in making an assessment.
- Decide what precautions are needed. Work must not be carried out which could expose people to hazardous substances without first considering the risks and the necessary precautions, and what else needs to be done to comply with COSHH.
- Prevent or adequately control exposure. The first priority is to eliminate the use of a harmful substance or mixture to prevent employees and others being exposed to hazardous substances. Where preventing exposure is not reasonably practicable, then it must adequately controlled. The eight principles of good practice and hierarchy of control (see below) correctly applied should ensure adequate control.
- Ensure that control measures are used and maintained properly and that safety procedures are followed.
- Monitor the exposure of employees to hazardous substances, where necessary.
- Undertake appropriate health surveillance where your assessment has shown this is necessary or where COSHH sets specific requirements.
- Prepare plans and procedures to deal with accidents, incidents and emergencies involving hazardous substances, where necessary.
- Ensure employees are properly informed, trained and supervised.

The eight principles of good practice (COSHH - Schedule 2A):

- design and operate the process or activity to minimise emission release and spread of substances hazardous to health;
- take into account all relevant all relevant routes of exposure – inhalation, skin absorption and ingestion – when developing control measures;
- control exposures by means that are proportionate to the health risk;
- choose the most effective and reliable control options to minimise escape and spread of the substance;
- provide personal protective equipment where adequate control cannot be achieved by other means;
- check and review regularly all elements of control measures for continuing effectiveness;
- inform and train all employees on the hazards and risks from these substances, and the controls in use;
- ensure that the control measures introduced do not increase the overall risk to health and safety.

Hierarchy of Control

The hierarchy of control measures for hazardous substances is:

1 Eliminate - question whether a harmful product needs to be used.

2 Substitute – is there a less hazardous alternative product or safer form of the product, e.g. paste rather than powder.

- 3 Change the process to emit less of the substance.
 - 4 Enclose the process so that the product does not escape.
 - 5 Extract emissions of the substance near the source. Use local exhaust ventilation or general ventilation.
 - 6 Reduce the amounts you use and store
 - 7 Have as few workers in harm's way as possible.
 - 8 Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, coveralls and a respirator. PPE must fit the wearer.
- If your control measures include 5, 7 and 8, make sure they all work together.

Local Exhaust Ventilation

Where local exhaust ventilation (LEV) is used to control exposure it must be checked regularly also thoroughly examined and tested by a competent person at least every 14 months.

Disposal of Waste

Where Hazardous Waste is generated the Council as employer has a duty of care to ensure it is disposed of properly. The method for disposal of waste should be specified in the COSHH Assessment. If unsure advice should be sought from suppliers or other source of competent advice.

Employees responsibilities

- Read all container labels carefully and be aware of risks to health and the precautions that should be taken.
- Never use a substance unless you are aware of the risks involved.
- Use all control measures correctly, always use them in the manner for which they are intended and never interfere with, or misuse anything provided in the interests of your health and safety.
- Use all personal protective equipment and/or clothing where recommended, know how to use the equipment properly and report any defects immediately.
- Always store substances correctly. Do not leave them lying around where they may create a hazard or where the containers may be damaged.
- Practice safe working habits. Always follow recognised safety procedures as identified in the assessment.
- Ask your Supervisor for relevant information if it is not readily available.
- Report any hazard or defect immediately.
- Take part in any training programmes organised or recommended by the Council.
- Attend medical checks if you are asked to do so.
- Do not interfere with or misuse anything provided for your health, safety or welfare.
- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do or do fail to do.

Should you experience any health problems when using a substance, report the matter immediately to your Supervisor or Manager.

Remember that hazardous substances may enter the body via:

- Inhalation
- Ingestion
- Skin or eye contact
- Direct entry through cuts, high pressure equipment or contaminated sharp objects.

Changes to classification and labelling information from 1 December 2010

The Regulation on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Substances and Mixtures (CLP Regulation) means that:

From 1 December 2010 the hazard classification and labelling of substances and mixtures will start to change;

Risk Phrases will be replaced with three digit Hazard Statements. For example:

R41, Risk of Serious Damage to the Eyes becomes Danger, H318: Causes Serious Eye Damage;

Safety Phrases will be replaced by Precautionary Statements e.g. P280 Wear protective clothing;

Hazard pictograms will have a red border and white background, and three new pictograms will be introduced (see examples below).

Current
CHIP
Symbol



Explosive



Highly/
Extremely
Flammable



Oxidising



Corrosive



Toxic /
Very Toxic



Dangerous
for the
Environment



Harmful or
Irritant

Examples of new Hazard Statements and Pictograms

	Example of hazard statement	Example of precautionary statement
	Heating may cause an explosion	Keep away from heat/sparks/open flames/hot surfaces – no smoking
	Heating may cause a fire	Keep only in original container
	May intensify fire; oxidiser	Take any precaution to avoid mixing with combustibles
	Causes serious eye damage	Wear eye protection
	Toxic if swallowed	Do not eat, drink or smoke when using this product
	Toxic to the aquatic life, with long lasting effects	Avoid release to the environment
	New pictogram , reflects serious longer term health hazards such as carcinogenicity and respiratory sensitisation eg May cause allergy or asthma symptoms or breathing difficulties if inhaled	In case of inadequate ventilation, wear respiratory protection
	New pictogram , refers to less serious health hazards such as skin irritancy/sensitisation and replaces the CHIP symbol eg May cause an allergic skin reaction	Contaminated work clothing should not be allowed out of the workplace
	New pictogram , used when the containers hold gas under pressure eg May explode when heated	None