

<b>Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (C.O.S.H.H.)</b>
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### **1.0 Overview**

The COSHH Regulations require every employer including subcontractors and the self employed to assess the risks to health arising from any hazardous substance either, used; process generated (e.g. welding fumes); or found at the place of work (e.g. contaminated land etc); and to take such action as is necessary to eliminate or control those risks.

COSHH must include consideration of the HSE hierarchy of controls e.g. elimination or the substitution of a safer alternative etc.

Masks and other items of P.P.E rarely give full protection. Effective COSHH management requires - hazard identification; risk assessment; giving information and training; the introduction of control measures; monitoring, review and record keeping. The assessments and information are available in printed form.

Subcontractors are responsible for preparing their own assessments and supplying copies to the Site Manager or Contracts Manager for materials brought to site by them. These must be checked, the details recorded in the site safety file.

The Buying Department must always obtain the manufacturer's and supplier's data sheets. These provide essential information but **are not assessments as such in themselves.**

### **2.0 Hazardous Substances or Materials**

Definitions are set out in the Construction Safety Manuals and include those that carry hazard warning symbols.

Where materials are ordered by site management, the site representative must request the safety data sheet for the hazardous substance(s) from the supplier – (the supplier is under a legal duty to provide this information).

A COSHH assessment will then be produced on the substance by the site management based on the information from the supplier and on the available background site information.

When the assessment information is received back on the site/workplace the Site Manager or Supervisor will take the necessary action.

If substances etc. are to be used before COSHH assessment information arrives on site, the Site Safety Supervisor must ensure that a competent person carries out a full assessment using all information available to him/her.

**N.B. The manufacturer's or supplier's hazardous materials data sheet, whilst providing basic information on the hazards, risks and precautionary measures to be taken, is not a COSHH Assessment.**

### **3.0 COSHH Information.**

The manager who has prepared the task/site specific COSHH assessment shall provide information and instruction to those operatives under their control who are to work with the hazardous substance or material, before work commences. If the COSHH assessment forms part of an overall risk assessment or method statement, training must be provided in accordance with that detailed below.

The training, i.e. COSHH assessment briefing and toolbox talks etc, must assist the operatives to fully understand the risks involved and the control measures to be implemented, with details of the type of PPE required and its correct use.

### **4.0 Medicals.**

Where health monitoring (e.g. skin checks for dermatitis) or surveillance (e.g. blood, urine tests) is identified as necessary by the COSHH assessment, steps must be taken to ensure that the relevant medical examinations take place. The Safety Department should be contacted for guidance.

### **5.0 Supervision, Monitoring and Record Keeping.**

Having established the correct working practices, site supervisors must ensure that those executing the work are using and maintaining the control measures correctly.

**REVIEW QUESTIONS SHOULD BE AIMED AT THE PROGRESSIVE ELIMINATION OF RISK, BY THE BEST CURRENT PRACTICES AVAILABLE.**

### **6.0 Site Management COSHH Duties**

The Site Management must obtain assessment information and maintain A Site COSHH Register. The COSHH register must be kept in the site files along with copies of the relevant COSHH assessments and Material Data Sheets.

If an assessment sheet or the actual packaging label identifies the substance as “high risk” the Site Manager must see if a safer alternative material or method can be substituted, that will meet both the specification and be acceptable to the client, designer; the user and all those likely to be affected etc.

When an order is received, the Site Manager will check the Material Safety Data sheet and COSHH Assessment to ensure that any necessary control measures, PPE or monitoring equipment are available on the site or workplace. Where they are not, then work is not to proceed until all PPE / Equipment required is made available.

Where materials are brought on to site, which were not purchased through the Buying Department, or materials/substances are already on or are produced by the site, (i.e. dust generated by a process), the Site Manager will carry out an assessment and brief as required, **before work commences.**

Always review Subcontractor’s’ COSHH Assessments and consider how others at the workplace will be affected. The details shall be recorded and the assessments filed in the in the site safety file.

Where a Subcontractor comes on to the workplace to carry out work with inadequate assessments the Site Supervisor should address the situation with appropriate action, not permit them to work until they have in place a suitable and sufficient COSHH assessment in place.

## **7.0 Buying Department Responsibilities**

Buying Department will obtain hazard data information for all materials and forward the information to the Site Manager with the copy orders.

If the information has previously been sent to the site for the same substance, the Buyer may advise the site of this, rather than send a further copy.

Where a substance classified as of 'high' risk, the Buyer should advise the site accordingly.

Designers and Buyers must always be alert and enquire as to the availability of less dangerous alternatives.

## **8.0 Briefing Subcontractors**

The person responsible for engaging a Subcontractor must ensure that the Subcontractor has the capacity to manage the COSHH, and complete Assessments for all materials to be used or substances likely to be on site.

The Subcontractor must ensure that all assessments are available to Site Management well in advance of work commencing.

## **9.0 Site Manager**

The Site Manager will receive information from the Buying Department. On receipt of the hazard data information, the Site Manager and/or Contracts Manager will carry out a COSHH assessment for the site concerned, carry out a task briefing to those involved, send a copy of the assessment to the Safety Department if appropriate.

## CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (C.O.S.H.H.)

ARE YOU USING ONE OF THESE ?

**THEN BEWARE!**



Acute toxicity, Very toxic (fatal), Toxic etc



Explosive, self reactive, organic, peroxide



Flammable gasses, flammable liquids, flammable solids, flammable aerosols, organic peroxides, self-reactive, pyrophoric, self-heating, contact with water emits flammable gas



Gasses under pressure



Harmful skin irritation, serious eye irritation



Harmful to the environment



Oxidising gases, oxidising liquids, oxidising solids



Corrosive (causes severe skin burns and eye damage), serious eye damage



Respiratory sensitiser, mutagen, carcinogen, reproductive toxicity, systemic target organ toxicity, aspiration hazard

THEY MAY CAUSE ASTHMA, DERMATITIS, CANCER  
OR POSSIBLY DEATH

**BEFORE STARTING WORK**

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY AND THOSE YOU WORK WITH  
INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ALWAYS

**READ THE LABEL**

- ◆ OBTAIN - MANUFACTURERS INFORMATION
- ◆ ASK - FOR THE JOB SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT
- ◆ COMPLY - WITH TRAINING REQUIREMENTS
- ◆ CHECK - FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
- ◆ ESTABLISH - STORAGE AND DISPOSAL REQUIREMENTS
- ◆ CONSIDER - HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

**ALWAYS CHECK FOR SAFER ALTERNATIVES**