

AN INTRODUCTION TO COSHH

COSHH stands for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. This information sheet summarises the key duties an employer needs to fulfil to control exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace. It also covers where they can be found and the types of products which need to be **COSHH** risk assessed.

Top 8 employer duties to follow COSHH

1. **Assess the risks** to health from hazardous substances used in or created by your workplace activities.
2. **Decide what precautions are needed.** You must not carry out work which could expose your employees to hazardous substances without first considering the risks and the necessary precautions, and what else you need to do to comply with COSHH.
3. **Prevent or adequately control exposure.** You must prevent your employees being exposed to hazardous substances. When preventing exposure is not reasonably practicable, then you must adequately control it.
4. **Ensure that control measures are used and maintained properly** and that safety procedures are followed.
5. **Monitor the exposure** of employees to hazardous substances if necessary.
6. **Carry out appropriate health surveillance** where your assessment has shown this is necessary or where COSHH sets specific requirements.
7. **Prepare plans and procedures** to deal with accidents, incidents and emergencies involving hazardous substances where necessary.
8. **Ensure employees are** properly informed, trained and supervised. You should provide your employees with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.

Where can you find hazardous substances?

Hazardous substances can be found in nearly all work places, even low risk ones. They may exist in various physical forms e.g. liquid, solid, gas, fume, smoke, vapour.

What products are hazardous and require a COSHH risk assessment?

It is important to consider hazardous substances that are created or generated as part of a process or activity e.g:-











- Concrete dust from cutting
- Emission of solder/welding fumes
- Aerosols from water cooling systems
- Waste products
- Contact with infected animals on farms or veterinary clinics

However, substances not covered by COSHH include:-

- Asbestos, lead and radiation
- Biological agents which can be caught from colleagues, e.g. common colds
- Substances in transit
- Explosive or flammable substances.

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One way of knowing if a chemical or product is hazardous is to look for hazard symbols on packaging, containers, etc. If the following symbols are present then a COSHH risk assessment will need to be undertaken.

	Explosive (Symbol: exploding bomb)		Flammable (Symbol: flame)
	Oxidising (Symbol: flame over circle)		Corrosive (Symbol: Corrosion)
	Acute toxicity (Symbol: Skull and crossbones)		Hazardous to the environment (Symbol: Dead tree and fish)
	Health hazard/Hazardous to the ozone layer (Symbol: Exclamation mark)		Serious health hazard (Symbol: health hazard)
	Gas under pressure (Symbol: Gas cylinder)		Some containers may still show orange rectangular labels which also depict the product's hazardous classification

Important Notice: Your Health & Safety Information Sheet is for guidance only. It does not replace our written Health & Safety policies and procedures and you must make sure you are fully aware of these.

Training Courses: For more details on our Health & Safety Training courses available, please contact our Accounts department via email: accounts@shrec.org.uk or visit our website: www.shrec.org.uk