HSE Pack

August

CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)

Empowering Safety Interventions 2026

What is COSHH?

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

A framework for protecting people from health risks arising from hazardous substances at work.

The COSHH approach

- Identify substances and hazards
- Assess how exposure may occur
- Evaluate the level of risk
- Decide and implement suitable controls

Why it matters

- COSHH Regulations 2002 apply to hazardous substances at work
- Employers and employees must consider how COSHH applies to their activities
- Controls should be proportionate to the significant risks identified



Who does it apply to?

COSHH applies where work may expose people to immediate or delayed risks to health.

Included

- People exposed through work activities
- Immediate health effects
- Delayed or cumulative health effects

Covered separately / excluded

- Asbestos and lead
- Radioactive, explosive, flammable or pressurised hazards
- Medical treatment
- Direct social contact



Why control hazardous substances?

Good control protects health, maintains productivity and supports legal compliance.

Consequences of failing to control hazardous substances

Exposure to hazardous substances can have serious short-term and long-term effects on health if appropriate controls are not in place.

- Serious illness or death
- Skin irritation, dermatitis or skin cancer
- Toxic fume exposure and secondary injury
- Infection from bacteria or other biological agents
- Potential for permanent health damage



What is a substance hazardous to health?

Classified substances

- Substances or mixtures classified as dangerous to health
- Hazard information shown on labels
- Supplier safety data sheets provide supporting information

Exposure standards

- Substances with occupational exposure limits
- Consider the substance and the way it is used

Biological agents

- Bacteria and other micro-organisms
- Direct work-related exposure
- Incidental exposure, such as sewage treatment

Key Elements of COSHH Management



Elements of COSHH

How hazardous substances enter the body

1

BREATHE IN

Inhalation

2

SWALLOW

Ingestion

3

SKIN CONTACT

Absorption

If a substance can change form, every relevant form must be considered when assessing harm

How can hazardous substances be identified?

1. **Check labels** Review hazard information on containers and packaging.
2. **Review the SDS** Use the supplier safety data sheet.
3. **Use work knowledge** Consider tasks, current good practice and known health issues
4. **Check guidance** Review COSHH, EH40 and relevant HSE guidance.

Look out for hazard signs

Risk Assessment **Activity** 1 **Method** Mixing **Area** Inside Well Ventilated **Exposure Time** 1/2 to 2 hours daily			**Comments** Use RPE as interim pending monitoring or for one-off tasks. If LEV used, monitor to verify it controls to below the OEL		
					
POLYTHENE OR NITRILE	POLYTHENE OR NITRILE	BS EN166 GRADE 3	AND	LEV OR	EN405 FFA2
					
EATING OR DRINKING	WASH AFTER USE	AFTER USE	ONCE CURED		
Risk Assessment **Activity** 3 **Method** Hand applying **Area** Inside Well Ventilated **Exposure Time** 4 to 8 hours daily			**Comments** Use RPE as interim pending monitoring or for one-off tasks. If LEV used, monitor to verify it controls to below the OEL		
					
POLYTHENE OR NITRILE	POLYTHENE OR NITRILE	BS EN166 GRADE 3	AND	LEV OR	EN405 FFA2
					
EATING OR DRINKING	WASH AFTER USE	AFTER USE	ONCE CURED		

Always check

- Container label
- Hazard pictogram
- Signal words and hazard statements
- Safety data sheet

The original presentation uses historic orange CHIP symbols.

Verify current labelling before reuse

Hazard is not the same as risk

RISK = likelihood and consequence of harm in the actual circumstances of use

Environment

- Confined or open space
- Indoors or outdoors
- Ventilation and occupancy

Method of use

- Brushing or spraying
- Diluting or mixing
- Frequency and duration

Exposure & controls

- Inhalation, ingestion or skin contact
- Local exhaust ventilation
- Existing control measures

Duties of employers

Employers must

- Assess health risks from substances used at work
- Prevent or adequately control exposure
- Ensure control measures are used
- Monitor the work environment
- Provide health surveillance where necessary
- Provide information, instruction and training



Control advice should be available in the safety data sheet and COSHH assessment supplied with the workpack

Duties of employees

Employees should

- Understand precautions in the COSHH assessment
- Follow the required control measures
- Ask the supervisor for the necessary measures and precautions
- Provide relevant health information when necessary
- Complete Health Screening
- Attend required medical examinations
- Comply with RPE and Face Fit requirements
- Report defects in plant, equipment and controls



Stop and seek guidance if the required controls are not available or are defective.

Read the COSHH assessment

Symbol	Symbol-letter	Indication of Danger
	E	Explosive
	O	Oxidising
	F+	Extremely flammable
	F	Highly flammable
	T+	Very toxic
	T	Toxic
	Xn	Harmful
	C	Corrosive
	Xi	Irritant
	N	Dangerous for the environment

Confirm before use

- ✓ Substance and task match
- ✓ Hazards and exposure routes
- ✓ Required engineering controls
- ✓ PPE and RPE requirements
- ✓ Emergency and first-aid actions

Documentation

01	**Safety data sheet**	Manufacturer or supplier information
02	**COSHH assessment**	Applicable PBS, client or equivalent assessment
03	**Procedure**	Relevant hazardous-substance management procedure
04	**Method statement**	Project-specific work method
05	**Site requirements**	Client and location-specific controls

Personal protective equipment

1 Eliminate / substitute | Remove the hazard or use a safer substance

2 Engineering controls | Enclose, isolate or ventilate

3 Administrative controls | Plan the task, limit exposure and supervise

4 PPE / RPE | Last line of defence where residual risk remains

Select PPE and RPE from the COSHH assessment. PPE does not replace higher-order controls.

Exposure monitoring under COSHH

Monitoring means measuring exposure to demonstrate that control is adequate.
It is not a health check

WHEN IS IT NEEDED?

- The risk assessment indicates monitoring is needed to maintain adequate control
- To demonstrate compliance with a WEL or BMGV
- When a change may affect exposure or controls

HOW IS IT MEASURED?

- Personal air sampling measures what a worker breathes
- Area or screening measurements indicate airborne contamination
- Surface wipes can indicate spread of contamination
- Biological monitoring measures uptake into the body

USE THE RESULTS

- Compare airborne results with the relevant WEL in EH40
- Confirm controls and PPE are working adequately
- Investigate results and improve controls where required
- Repeat at suitable intervals and after relevant change

Health surveillance is just a safety net.
It does not replace preventing or adequately controlling exposure.
Exposure Effects can be Permanent

COSHH: Key Takeaways

- ✅ Understand the hazards before starting work
- ✅ Follow the COSHH assessment and control measures
- ✅ Use the correct PPE and equipment
- ✅ Report damaged controls, spills or concerns immediately
- ✅ Protect your health and the health of those around you
- ✅ Never bypass control measures designed to protect health

Protect health. Control exposure. Follow the assessment.

Work Safe – Home Safe