

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, every employer is required to identify all substances in use, and to assess their risks to their employees (and others), taking into account the manner in which they are used and the quantities involved.

A "Substance Hazardous to Health" is any substance which:-

- Is listed in the current 'CHIP' list and /or carries a hazard warning symbol.
- Has a prescribed occupational exposure limit (see HSE document EH40).
- Is a biological agent. e.g. Leptospirosis
- Is a dust of any kind, when present in a substantial concentration.
- Presents hazards to health comparable to those listed above.

There are other hazardous substances, but because they have legislation specifically covering their use, they are not covered by COSHH regulations e.g. asbestos, lead and substances which are hazardous because they are radioactive, asphyxiants, at high pressure, at extremes of temperature, or are flammable or explosive.

For a brief generic guide to the hazards created by the most common categories of hazardous substances used in the workplace.

1. Identification and Assessments

The following are factors to be considered in undertaking a COSHH assessment:-

- Which hazardous substances are being used?
- What quantities of the substances are involved?
- What form is the substance in? e.g. liquid, dust, solid, vapour
- How can the substance cause harm? e.g. by inhalation, by skin contact, by absorption through the skin, by ingestion.
- Who could be exposed to the substances and for how long?
- Can the substance be substituted by a non-hazardous or less hazardous substance?

In gathering this information reference should be made to the manufacturer's product data sheet, but the data sheet is not a COSHH assessment and the Company should use such data along with the above points of reference to determine the potential risk. It is the assessment of the specific application of each substance in the working environment, and any potential residual effects once applied, that determines the degree of risk from its use.

2. Instructions and Training

The Company will ensure that employees are trained and properly instructed in the use and storage of any hazardous substance and are aware of the importance of using washing facilities before consuming food or drink.

All managers and supervisors must ensure that employees are properly instructed before using hazardous substances. Smoking should not be permitted when working with hazardous substances.

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