

## COSHH Policy (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health)

If any work is carried out by our employees which involves contact or exposure to substances hazardous to health, steps must be taken to ensure compliance with regulations. It is the responsibility of management to provide a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk involved. This must be updated where applicable.

The assessment must be carried out by a competent person, taking account of the substances involved. Comparison of such exposure will then have to be made with any relevant published standards. This assessment must be written with the exception of very simple cases.

### Prevention or Control of Exposure to Substances Hazardous to Health

At all times adequate control measures must be taken to prevent exposure by employee to substances hazardous to health. Where these are inadequate in themselves, personal protective equipment must be used.

The approved code of practice "*Control of Substances hazardous to Health*", lists the following measures for preventing or controlling exposure to such hazards:

- Elimination of the use of the substance
- Substitution by a less hazardous substance
- Total enclosure of the process
- Plant, or process or system of work, which minimise generation of dust or fumes
- Partial enclosure with exhaust ventilation
- Local exhaust ventilation
- Reduction of number of employees exposed and exclusion of non-essential access
- Reduction in the period of exposure for employees
- Regular cleaning of contaminated areas
- Safe storage and disposal arrangements
- Prohibition of eating, drinking, smoking etc. in contaminated areas
- Provision of adequate facilities for washing, changing and storage of clothing including arrangement for laundering
- Rehearsed procedure for emergencies.

### Control measures require testing, examination and maintenance.

The regulations also require an employer to carry out the following:

- Take all responsible steps to ensure that they are properly used or applied.
- Ensure that they are maintained in an efficient state in proper working order and in good repair.
- Thoroughly examine and test engineering controls at least once in every 14 months (in certain specified cases the interval is a shorter period).
- Ensure that respiratory protective equipment is examined and tested at suitable intervals.
- Maintain records of these examinations and tests for at least 5 years.
- Records will be kept relating to initial assessment, records of examinations and tests of control measures, monitoring records and records of health surveillance of exposed work people.

## Exposure Limits

If a substance is found to be above its maximum exposure limit, steps must be taken as far as reasonably practical to reduce it to below its listed maximum exposure limit.

Exposure to substances which enter the body via the gut (ingestion) or through the skin or mucous membranes, should be controlled to standards such that all persons should be exposed repeatedly without adverse side effects. Employees should have adequate information and instruction regarding substances hazardous to health, so that they are aware of the risk involved and the precautionary measures they should take.

## Substances Hazardous to Health

The definition of substances hazardous to health covers virtually all substances capable of causing adverse health effects or disease arising from work activities.

There are five identified categories which, summarised, are as follows:

- Substances defined under the classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulation 1984 as very toxic, harmful, corrosive or irritant.
- Substances with a maximum exposure limit of an occupational exposure standard.
- Micro-organisms creating health hazards.
- Any dust at a substantial concentration in the air.
- Any substance not in the above, but which creates a health hazard comparable to any of them.

Exceptions from the COSHH Regulations are exposures to lead and asbestos which are covered by their own regulations.

If a label displays any one of the standard safety signs for harmful, toxic, corrosive, flammable (shown below), this indicates the substance is covered by the COSHH Regulations

