

# CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)

## POLICY STATEMENT

People come into contact with a wide range of hazardous substances at work that may arise from a number of sources, for example:

- Solvents, acids, lead, etc. Used directly in processes
- Fungus, mites, etc., that arise naturally
- Cleaning chemicals, etc., used in services
- Exhaust fumes, dust, gases, etc., given off as by-products.

The risk to the employee when coming into contact with a hazardous substance is dependent on the routes of exposure. There are a number of routes through which a person may become exposed and substances may prove hazardous through only one or several of these routes:

- Inhalation e.g. dust, fungus, solvents, paints exhaust fumes, organisms, etc
- Ingestion e.g. heavy metals, organisms etc
- Contact with the skin e.g. cleaning chemicals, solvents used oil etc
- Absorption through the skin e.g. solvents
- Injection into the body e.g. drugs, high pressure washers, compressed air
- Introduction into the body via wounds e.g. hepatitis, Weil's disease etc

In many cases exposure to work related substances may, if it remains uncontrolled, lead to illness or even death in severe cases.

Consequently the **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations** have been formatted to ensure that employers take reasonable steps to reduce the risk to employees from exposure to hazardous substances in their working environment.

## **1. RISK ASSESSMENT**

The company will assess the risks associated with the use of a substance before they allow employees to be exposed to it.

Similar to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations risk assessments, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessments are carried out to determine whether the exposure of a person to certain substances is acceptable. There are a number of information sources that we will refer to, to find out if the substances being used are potentially hazardous:

- The label on the container
- Labels and data sheets provided by the supplier of the substance (suppliers and manufacturers are required to supply this information by law)
- The COSHH Regulations and the HSE Guidance EH40 which is revised annually
- The HSE publication – The Approved Supply List
- Information from trade associations and similar businesses

## **2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE**

The COSHH assessment is a systematic review of the use of the substance present:

- Its form and quantity
- Possible harmful effects
- How it is to be stored
- Handled
- Used
- Transported, the people who may be affected by it and the controls that are appropriate

The first aim of the assessment should be to eliminate the use of a hazardous substance or, if this is not possible, ensure that exposure is adequately controlled.

## **3. CONTROL MEASURES**

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to put control measures in place to ensure that exposure to a substance is minimised. In deciding on the control measure to be taken the following hierarchy will be followed:

- Eliminate the hazard altogether
- Use a safer substance (substitution)
- Enclose the process
- Use engineering systems e.g., extraction or ventilation
- Safe system of work
- Personal protective equipment (this is the last resort)

When using control measures and/or personal protective equipment it is necessary to meet certain requirements of the COSHH regulations:

- Employers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees are using the control measures and the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided
- Employers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the control system or PPE are being maintained and are working efficiently. This includes keeping suitable maintenance records.
- PPE must be suitable for the purpose for which it is provided
- PPE must comply with any design standards laid down
- Employees have a duty to make full and proper use of any control measures and the PPE provided

#### **4. MONITORING EXPOSURE**

In addition to the initial assessment and provision of controls it may be necessary to monitor the exposure of employees to certain substances.

Monitoring would be required where:

- There could be serious risks to health if control measures should deteriorate
- It cannot be guaranteed without measurement that exposure limits are not being exceeded, or control measures are working properly

In addition the use of certain chemicals means that employees must undergo health surveillance to allow a record of exposure and effect to be kept. Those liable to these requirements are detailed in Schedule 5 to the COSHH Regulation. Where health surveillance is carried out records or copies of them must be kept for 40 years from the date of the last entry.

#### **5. INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING**

If employees are, or may be exposed to, substances hazardous to health the Company must provide suitable and sufficient information instruction and training for employees to know the health risks created by the exposure and the precautions which should be taken. The information must include the results of any monitoring and the collective (non-personalised) results of health surveillance.

Signed



Managing Director

Position

18 September 2010

Dated