



2023-2024
Hampstead Fine Arts

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

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Reviewed by: Sarmad Ismail
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INTRODUCTION

Using chemicals or other hazardous substances at work can put people's health at risk. Even within seemingly low risk environments people can encounter a range of substances capable of being hazardous to health.

This guidance note provides a framework to be adopted to ensure compliance with the COSHH regulations.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- *Complete an inventory identifying all hazardous substances used in your premises and obtain material safety data sheets for these.*
- *Ensure that a documented risk assessment is made for the use of any substances which present a significant risk to health.*
- *Ensure that controls are in place and are adequately monitored for effectiveness.*
- *Ensure that any equipment required for controlling risk is adequately maintained.*
- *Ensure that all staff have received information, instruction and training where required.*
- *Ensure that records of assessments are kept on the premises.*

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The main aim of the COSHH Regulations 2002 is to ensure that where a need for the use of a hazardous substance is required, the situation is assessed, and appropriate control measures are taken.

Specifically, regulations require employers to:

- a) assess the health risks which arise from hazardous substances in their work activities;
- b) ensure that the exposure of personnel to substances hazardous to health is either prevented or adequately controlled;
- c) ensure that any equipment provided to control the risk, e.g. local exhaust ventilation, fume cupboards, personal protective equipment (PPE) is adequately maintained;
- d) provide information, instruction and training to staff and others who may be affected on the level of risk and how it is to be controlled;

- e) provide adequate and appropriate health surveillance when required.

SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH

Aside from substances controlled by their own specific legislation, for example, asbestos, lead and radioactive substances, substances hazardous to health as defined by the COSHH regulations are:

- a) substances classified as very toxic, toxic, harmful, corrosive or irritant; these can be identified by their warning label and carry pictograms. All COSHH pictograms detailed below:



Explosive



Flammable



Oxidising



Corrosive



Acute Toxicity



Serious Health Hazard.



Hazardous to environment



Health Hazard/Hazard to ozone layer



Gas under pressure

- b) biological agents directly connected with work including micro-organisms;
- c) dust of any kind when present as a substantial concentration in the air;
- d) substances which have a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL)¹ assigned to them by the Health and Safety Commission (examples include wood dusts and chlorine);
- e) Any other substance not specified above which may create a comparable hazard to a person's health.
- f) staff not to use any substances that do not have a CoSHH assessment.

Such substances may be hazardous through inhalation, ingestion, and/or absorption through the skin or skin contact.

¹ These were previously known as OEL's (Occupational Exposure Limits) and MEL's (Maximum Exposure Limits)

In schools these substances will generally be found in school laboratories, school practical workshops, print rooms, etc. Caretaker's and cleaner's stores in all premises are also likely to contain such substances.

It should be remembered that substances hazardous to health can also be created by practical work (e.g., wood dust, products of chemical experiments, work with micro-organisms). In such situations, prevention or effective control may be required to minimise the risks to health.

Establishments should ensure that an inventory of all hazardous substances used / generated on site is compiled; this inventory should then be used to identify those substances which present a significant hazard and thus require an individual risk assessment.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

The primary requirement for the control of hazardous substances is to conduct a COSHH Risk Assessment before the use or generation of any such substances.

Any process which is liable to expose staff, children or visitors to substances hazardous to health should not be carried out unless a "suitable and sufficient" assessment has been made of the risks to health and measures are in place to eliminate or adequately control exposure to such substances.

Within curriculum areas, in particular science and art, heads of department are responsible for the control of substances hazardous to health and ensuring that guidance and model risk assessments contained in the relevant national publications are followed (see National Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD) [Health & Safety | NSEAD](#)).

Where model assessments are used it should be ensured these are adapted to local circumstances and incorporated into schemes of work, planning, etc.

Where generic COSHH risk assessments are not available, tutors must ensure the risks posed are adequately assessed by a 'competent' person.

A competent person is one with sufficient:

- knowledge and experience of work activities;
- knowledge of substances used / generated;
- ability to determine effective control measures.

Material safety data sheets should be obtained from the manufacturer of the product and stored in the class folder.

These data sheets are not by themselves a suitable and sufficient COSHH risk assessment. The information in the data sheet must be compared to the particular task and circumstances in which the substance is to be used and a decision made about the measures necessary to control exposure adequately.

CONTROLS

Exposure to substances hazardous to health should either be prevented altogether by substituting the substance with one less harmful, or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled.

In all cases personal protective equipment (PPE) should only be used where it is not reasonably practicable to control exposure adequately by other means.

Spraying should be in a well-ventilated area.

If a substance is hazardous by inhalation, it is likely to have been assigned a "workplace exposure limit" (WEL); this should be used to assess the level of control.

Employees have a duty to make full and proper use of all control measures identified as required in the risk assessment and must wear appropriate PPE (eye protection, gloves, etc.) where required. Where PPE is identified as necessary for use by staff and pupils it should be suitable for the purpose. Adequate information and training must be provided on its use and maintenance.

All PPE must be kept clean, in good repair and stored correctly to prevent contamination.

INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

Information, instruction and training must be given concerning risks to health and appropriate precautions to all those who may be exposed. Furthermore, information must be provided regarding the results of monitoring and/or the collective results of any necessary health surveillance.

It should be noted that the requirements relating to assessments, monitoring records and health surveillance records apply to all hazardous substances and not just carcinogens.

Reviewed by: SI