

Hazardous Substances

The **Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002** (as amended) provide a framework to help employers protect people in their workplace against health risks from hazardous substances.

The NHSGGC COSHH policy can be viewed here (insert hyperlink)

Identifying Hazardous Substances

A hazardous substance is:

- a) A substance which is classified as very toxic, toxic, harmful, corrosive or irritant in Part I of the approved supply list of the **Chemicals (Hazard Information Packaging) Regulations**;
- b) A substance for which the Health and Safety Executive has approved a workplace exposure limit;
- c) A biological agent;
- d) Dust where the average concentration exceeds specified levels
- e) A substance, not mentioned above, whose chemical or toxicological properties and the way it is used or is present at the workplace creates a risk to health, including asphyxiants, medicines, cosmetics and pesticides.

Exceptions

Substances that are only hazardous at high pressure or extreme temperature. Asbestos, Lead, radioactive substances and substances with explosive or flammable properties are covered by separate regulations. Biological agents outside the employer's control, e.g. catching an infection from a workmate.

Hazardous Substances can endanger health by being

- **absorbed** or
- **injected**

both through the skin or mucous membranes, or

- **inhaled** or
- **ingested.**

Whenever, *reasonably practicable*, employers must prevent staff and others being exposed to hazardous substances. This can be done by

- changing the activity or process so that the substance is no longer required or generated;
- replacing the substance or product with a safer alternative;
- using as alternative form e.g. tablets or pellets instead of powder.

Within NHSGGC it is not always possible to prevent this exposure therefore any exposure must be adequately controlled. This can be done by

- Engineering or technical controls to enclose a process or minimize materials used or waste produced.
 - Controlling exposure at source e.g. local exhaust ventilation
 - Reducing the number of people exposed, the level or duration of exposure
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g. gloves, face masks, respirators.
- *PPE should only be a last resort where elimination and other forms of control are not sufficient.*

The Requirements of COSHH

Complying with COSHH involves:

1. **Assessing the risks** to health arising from work activities or processes carried out by staff within NHSGGC.
2. **Deciding what precautions are needed.** Any work which could expose employees to hazardous substances must not be carried out unless both the risks and the necessary precautions have been assessed.
3. **Preventing or adequately controlling exposure**, by introducing appropriate measures.
4. **Ensuring that control measures are used and maintained** properly, and that any safety procedures that have been laid down are followed;
5. **Monitoring exposure** of workers to hazardous substances and carrying out health surveillance, where necessary;
6. **Carrying out appropriate health surveillance where the assessment has shown this is necessary or where COSHH sets specific requirements.**
7. **Preparing plans and procedures to deal with accidents, incidents and emergencies** involving hazardous substances, where necessary.

8. **Informing, instructing and training** employees about the risks and the precautions to be taken.

Manager's responsibilities:

- Ensure that they or a nominated deputy attend a COSHH training course (these are run by the Health & Safety department);
- Assess the risks and define precautions to adequately control exposures, including risks arising from accidental spills or other incidents;
- Inform staff about the risks and precautions to take;
- Monitor to ensure controls and precautions are used and where necessary maintained;
- Decide on health surveillance;
- Get advice where required.

Employees responsibilities:

- Follow the rules and safe systems of work, including the correct use of controls including PPE.
- Co-operate with health monitoring and surveillance.

Form COSHH1 – list of substances should be used as a record of any hazardous substances within your department.

COSHH Risk Assessment Form should be used for recording your risk assessment.