

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Arrangement

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1.0 Statement of purpose

This arrangement outlines the practical steps Shropshire Council will take to protect all employees, clients & visitors whilst also complying with Health and Safety Legislation.

2.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all Shropshire Council employees including part time, temporary staff and volunteers.

3.0 Hazardous substances

Many materials or substances used or created at work could harm your health. These substances could be dusts, gases or fumes that you breathe in, or liquids, gels or powders that come into contact with your eyes or skin. There could also be harmful micro-organisms present that can cause infection, an allergic reaction or are toxic.

Harmful substances can be present in anything from paints and cleaners to wood dust, welding fume, blood or waste. Ill health caused by these substances used at work is preventable. Many substances can harm health but, used properly, they almost never do.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH), require us to adequately control exposure to materials in the workplace that cause ill health.

Substances that are not covered by COSHH, as they have their own specific regulations:

- Lead
- Asbestos – See A-Z of Arrangements
- Radioactive substances - See A-Z of Arrangements

4.0 What you must do

Prevent or reduce Staff exposure to hazardous substances by:

- finding out what the health hazards are
- deciding how to prevent harm to health through risk assessment.
- providing control measures to reduce harm to health.
- making sure the control measures are used.
- keeping all control measures in good working order
- providing information, instruction and training for Staff and others
- providing monitoring and health surveillance in appropriate cases
- planning for emergencies

5.0 Roles and responsibilities – who does what

The Organisation - Specific Responsibilities document sets out the roles and responsibilities with respect to health and safety for all levels of staff within the Council. This document forms part of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and can be found here: [Health and Safety Policy](#)

6.0 Implementation

Management guidance in the form of Frequently Asked Questions is provided and updated to support the implementation of the arrangement.

7.0 Compliance

This arrangement will enable Shropshire Council to conform to the statutory requirements and best current practice.

8.0 Review of arrangement

This arrangement will be reviewed by the Health & Safety Team, every five years or sooner if there are legislative changes.

Approving Body

Health, Safety & Welfare Group for consultation	April 2008
Health and Safety Forum for implementation	
Reviewed HR&D Health and Safety Team	January 2014
Reviewed HR&D Health and Safety Team	November 2015
Reviewed Workplace & Transformation, Health and Safety Team	February 2018
Reviewed Health and Safety Team	October 2021
Reviewed Health and Safety Team	December 2024
Reviewed Health and Safety Team	February 2026

Frequently Asked Questions

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1 How do I identify the hazards?

Identify which substances are harmful by reading the product labels and safety data sheets (SDS) Refer to appendix 2. If in doubt, contact your supplier.



Also think about harmful substances produced by your processes, such as cutting or grinding, or to which staff may otherwise be exposed.

Examples include:

- processes that emit wood dust from cutting or sanding, silica dust from cutting paving slabs, fumes from welding, mould spores from historic books or antiquities, vapour, mist or gas
- skin contact with liquids, pastes and dusts.
- Leptospirosis in outdoor spaces
- Anthrax in the fabric of old buildings
- animal waste
- blood, bodily fluids in care settings or public buildings



Identify any substances that have [workplace exposure limits \(WELs\)](#) for example wood and silica dusts. WEL's can be found on safety data sheets or in [EH40/2005 Workplace exposure limits \(hse.gov.uk\)](#), which is freely available.

Under the COSHH regulations, workplace exposure limits (WELs) are assigned to many hazardous substances, which must not be exceeded. Exposure limits are in place to control the effects of substances, depending on the nature of the substance and the effects of exposure. Around 500 substances have WELs assigned to them, and these hazardous substances could be chemicals, fumes, dust or fibres.

2 How do I prevent harm by doing a risk assessment?

Decide who might be harmed and how.

Think about:

- how staff might be exposed (whether the substance can be breathed in, get onto or through the skin or can even be swallowed) and the effects of exposure by each of these routes
- how often people work with the substance and for how long.
- anyone else who could be exposed - do not forget maintenance staff, contractors and other visitors or members of the public who could be exposed.
- what you're already doing to control the risks
- what further action you need to take to control the risks
- who needs to carry out the action.
- when the action is needed by, is it urgent

A safety data sheet is not a risk assessment. You should use the information it contains to help make your own assessment. See question 6 below for templates.

Store the SDS with the completed risk assessment

3 How do I control the risks?

Once you have carried out a risk assessment and identified which harmful substances are present, and how Staff can be harmed, you need to think about preventing exposure. There is a hierarchy of controls that you need to follow:

Elimination

Do you really need to use a particular substance, or is a safer alternative available?

Can you change the process to eliminate its use or avoid producing it? If this is not possible, you must put in place adequate control measures to reduce exposure.

Changing the process to reduce risks

Consider whether you can change the process you use to reduce the risk of exposure. For example: using water to reduce dust produced when cutting concrete slabs; rather than spraying a substance can it be painted on.

Containment

Enclose the process or activity as much as possible to minimise the escape or release of the harmful substance.

Use a properly designed local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system which extracts dust, fume, mist, gases or vapour through a hood or booth and reduces the exposure of the worker.



Use local
exhaust
ventilation

All LEV should be checked regularly by a member of staff. Any defects noticed should be reported and dealt with **straight away**. Also, LEV must be examined and tested every 14 months by a competent person (someone who has the necessary

skills, knowledge and experience to carry out the work safely). At the Council this is normally done by an insurance engineer.

Systems of work

Plan the storage of hazardous substances and disposal of waste.

A simple list of do's and don'ts can be written to assist staff in following the correct procedure. This can be used as an on-the-job training document.

Access to hazardous substances should be limited to those people who need to use them and have been given the appropriate training.

Plan the storage of materials and use appropriate containers. Check that storage containers are correctly labelled and that incompatible materials, for example acids and caustics are separated. Also see [SR24](#) for guidance on storing chemical products (small scale)

There should also be means to contain spillage to prevent it spreading to other parts of the premises. Indoors this could be achieved by using a bunded tray or cabinet. For more information on correct storage of flammable substances see the [Dangerous Substances Arrangement](#)



Cleaning

Exposure to hazardous substances can occur during cleaning, so plan and organise the workplace so that it can be easily and effectively cleaned. Smooth work surfaces will allow easy cleaning.

Have the right equipment and procedures to clear up spillages quickly and safely.

Clean regularly using a 'dust-free' method – vacuum, do not sweep.

Where a contracted cleaning service is used, they should provide COSHH assessments and controls for their employees, however they should be readily available to view.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

If you cannot adequately control exposure by other means, the Council will provide free of charge, personal protective clothing and equipment, in combination with other control measures. PPE includes safety footwear, gloves, aprons, respiratory protective equipment (RPE), safety glasses and goggles.

Do not automatically opt for personal protective equipment (PPE) as a control measure. PPE should be considered as a last resort because it is not as reliable or effective as other measures. Note that certain types of RPE will require Face Fit Testing.

PPE requires regular checks, maintenance correct storage and replacement when no longer effective. Refer to the [PPE guidance](#) for more information.

A record of re-usable PPE issue and any routine maintenance of PPE should be kept for audit purposes.

Information and training



All staff who are using or producing hazardous substances should complete the on-line training which is available on Leap into Learning [COSHH](#).

Staff should also read and sign to say they have read and understood the COSHH risk assessment/s, a copy of this should be kept for reference. Managers need to ensure staff understand what the hazards and risk are, and what they need to do to protect themselves. Where practical, talking staff through each assessment and controls is recommended to further aid their understanding.

Face to Face training is available, free – bookable via ERP Course Catalogue this is for employees who are carrying out COSHH risk assessments.

4 Who should carry out COSHH risk assessments?

Staff who have been through the face-to-face COSHH training should be competent to carry out COSHH risk assessments.

The Health and Safety Team can assist with COSHH risk assessments.

5 Should COSHH risk assessments be recorded and reviewed?

Yes.

Review the risk assessment regularly to ensure it's kept up to date and accounts for any changes in your workplace. For example, changes in:

- staff
- a process
- the substances or equipment used

You must review the controls you have put in place to make sure they are working.

Also consider a review if your staff have spotted any problems or there have been any accidents or near misses.

6 What template COSHH risk assessment should I use?

Option 1 – Include within your general risk assessment. This is only appropriate if you are using lower hazard domestic type cleaning products, for example in a

café, a Children's Home setting or occasional use in a library. See here for an example of how to do this. [Example risk assessment for food preparation, cooking and service](#). If you are in any doubt whether this is the appropriate option please discuss with the H&S Team.

Option 2 – Use the COSHH risk assessment Appendix 1 below.

7 What if an employee raises an issue related to hazardous substances?

Whenever an employee raises a health and safety issue related to hazardous substances in the workplace, Service Areas will take all necessary steps to investigate the circumstances and review the COSHH risk assessment. Where corrective actions are needed to resolve problems, employees will be advised of the actions taken. The issue may need to be reported on ERP as a Near Miss or Incident (no injury).

8 What records should be kept?

COSHH risk assessments should be kept for 40 years.

Refer to the Health & Safety section of Shropshire Council's retention schedule (follow link) for the retention periods appropriate for other related documentation. [What is the corporate retention schedule? | Shropshire Council Intranet](#)

9 When do staff require health surveillance?

Health surveillance is required where:

- there is a disease associated with the substance in use (eg Asthma Dermatitis, Cancers);
- it is possible to detect the disease or adverse change and reduce the risk of further harm;
- the conditions in the workplace make it likely that the disease will appear.

Health surveillance should not be confused with general health screening or health promotion.

Objectives for health surveillance are:

- protecting the health of employees by early detection of adverse changes or disease;
- collecting data for detecting or evaluating health hazards;
- evaluating control measures.

Health surveillance is a process; it may be a regular planned assessment of one or more aspects of a worker's health, for example: lung function or skin condition.

However, it is not enough to simply carry out suitable tests, questionnaires or examinations. Employers must then have the results interpreted and take action to eliminate or further control exposure. It may be necessary to redeploy affected workers if necessary.

Health surveillance is likely to be needed for employees involved in processes that produce:

- hardwood dusts (around 40 species of hardwoods are implicated) and
- softwood dusts from Cedar.
- rosin based solder flux fume.
- dust when cutting blocks, paving and kerbstones
- dust when chasing with handheld power tools.
- welding fume from regular welding of stainless steel.

Health surveillance is provided by our Occupational Health department.

Occupationalhealth@shropshire.gov.uk

Where health surveillance is required for the role, managers need to request base-line health surveillance for new starters. For more information [click here](#)

Thereafter health surveillance will be conducted periodically (eg annually). Managers must arrange these with the Occupational Health Team.

On leaving the employment of the Council, managers must make Occupational Health aware that the employee no longer requires health surveillance.

10 Where can I find out more information

[Working with substances hazardous to health: A brief guide to COSHH](#)

[Case studies](#) examples of real life situations with COSHH

[Example risk assessments](#) use these to get ideas for completing assessments

[EH40.2005 Workplace exposure limits](#)

[RPE \(Respiratory Protective Equipment\) - COSHH Essentials e-tool](#)

[HSE guidance on working with silica](#) these guides include advice for managers and cutting blocks, paving and kerbstones with a cut-off saw

[HSE guidance SR20](#) soldering fume from rosin cored solder

[HSE guidance SR21](#) dust from abrasive wheels

[HSE guidance SR24](#) storing chemical products (small scale)

[COSHH essentials: CN0: Advice for managers](#) silica, advice for managers

Appendix 1 – Follow link below to COSHH Risk Assessment Blank Template

[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) Arrangement](#)

Appendix 2 - Hazard Warning Symbols:



Toxic



Dangerous to the environment



Corrosive



Explosive



Flammable



Oxidising



Irritant/sensitisation



Carcinogenicity/respiratory sensitisation



Contains gas under pressure