

USE OF CHEMICALS AT WORK POLICY

1. General statement

It is our policy to ensure that the risks associated with the use of chemicals on-site is minimised at all times. This will be achieved by implementing a series of risk control measures. Our starting point will be to eliminate the use of hazardous chemicals wherever possible. If this can't be done then we will take all reasonable steps to find less hazardous chemicals. In the event that hazardous chemicals will need to be used, control systems such as local exhaust ventilation will be introduced. Personal protective equipment (PPE) will only be issued where hazards cannot be effectively managed by other means. The use of new chemicals will be assessed prior to use and where this expertise is not available in-house, it will be brought in from suitably qualified third parties.

2. The legal position

The use of chemicals in the workplace is governed by the **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)** and the **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (Amendment) Regulation 2004**. These require us to minimise the risks from using chemicals at work and to introduce control measures to manage those which may remain. COSHH also requires us to train employees in the safe use of chemicals and to monitor the effectiveness of any control measures. In certain circumstances, we are required to conduct health surveillance. This will occur if any employee is exposed to a hazardous substance which is known or is likely to cause a disease or be detrimental to health. COSHH also requires us to store chemicals safely in order to avoid the risks of fire, explosion or environmental damage.

3. Procedure

It is our policy that this procedure will be followed by all staff with responsibilities for the procurement and safe use of chemicals whilst on our premises.

Ordering chemicals

Adequate information on each chemical must be obtained prior to its use. This will take the form of a material safety data sheet (MSDS), which should be provided by the supplier of the chemical. If the intention is to use a chemical for the first time, then the relevant MSDS needs to be obtained before the chemical is ordered. Where necessary, further information will be obtained from the chemical supplier and other resources, such as the Health & Safety Executive website (<http://www.hse.gov.uk>). **We endeavor to stock and use only low-hazard chemicals.**

Use of chemicals on-site

The use of all chemicals on-site will be assessed. For those which have relatively low-hazard properties, this process will be straightforward. In these cases, it will be assumed that implementation of controls in line with the MSDS will be sufficient. In the event that we have high-hazard substances, such as potential cancer-causing agents are used, managers are expected to try and source less hazardous substitutes. Where this is not possible good controls will be required. If chemicals will need to be mixed with other materials, each must be assessed in order to ensure that no adverse reaction will occur. The MSDS will provide information on incompatible chemicals. The importance of this procedure must not be overlooked as even everyday cleaning agents can cause a serious reaction if mixed.

COSHH Assessments

For all materials or substances utilised which may be hazardous to health, a formal COSHH Assessment will be carried out by the managers or. A register of hazardous substances shall be kept at the head office along with all relevant Manufacturers Safety Data Sheets. Significant findings of the assessments will be communicated to the relevant operatives, together with the necessary MSDS sheets and instructions for use.

Storage

We will provide appropriate storage according to the properties of each chemical. The type of storage necessary will be determined by reference to the MSDS. Special consideration will be given to flammable liquids, environmentally hazardous chemicals and oxidising agents (due to the risks of explosion). The suitability of all chemical storage will be reviewed as necessary by.

4. Employee duties

All employees will be expected to co-operate with us in respect of any controls which have been introduced, to ensure the safe use and storage of chemicals on-site. Where PPE has been deemed to be necessary, employees will be expected to wear and maintain it in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. We also expect all employees to report any concerns to their manager or supervisor. These will be dealt with promptly. Should any further action be required, then the employee raising the concern will be informed as to what form it will take.

5. Employee training

All employees will receive information, instruction and training on how to use chemicals safely. This will be repeated as necessary, e.g. on the introduction of new chemicals or processes. Training will be provided in a practical form in which the hazards and controls are clearly understood, e.g. training on operating procedures.

6. Monitoring

This policy will be monitored by managers through the carrying out of periodic safety audits. These will cover the following:

- use of chemicals
- maintenance of control systems
- adherence to safe working practices

- provision of information to employees
- storage of chemicals.

Where contractors are engaged on site, they will be monitored to ensure that they do not pose a hazard to employees, visitors or themselves.

GUIDE TO MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

Section	Contains	Useful for	Watch out for
1	Company and substance information	Phone number of supplier of information	This tends to be pretty straightforward
2	Composition of material	Can contain useful classification information	Reads like a recipe of unpronounceable ingredients. It often quotes the hazards of individual components undiluted, as it's the product which is classified and not the individual components
3	Hazard identification	Summary of main hazards of the material	This tends to use general catch-all phrases such as "use with care"
4	First Aid measures	Important first aid measures and whether referral to doctor or hospital is required	Can be just general first aid advice and not very specific. If you do need to send someone to hospital, they will need to take the data sheet with them
5	Fire fighting measures.	Will generally advise on the correct fire extinguisher	The list of products given off by a fire may not be useful to anyone other than the fire brigade. Remember that in a fire situation your priority is staff safety. Do stress that there should be no heroics in tackling chemical fires, as they can easily get out of hand
6	Spill procedures	Tends to give generic advice	Make sure you have the emergency number for the local water company or Environment Agency
7	Handling and storage	Can give good advice on where not to store your material	The advice can be quite general, but worth a look
8	Exposure controls	Tends to contain lots of figures on exposure limits as well as general advice on protective clothing	If it says "use suitable gloves", glove suppliers will tell you which type will protect the skin. Give them a call; but remember that some chemicals can penetrate certain gloves and protective masks. The suppliers of the protective equipment are experts, so use them

9	Physical and chemical properties	List of characteristics	Not generally useful, but legally required. Tends to contain lots of technical information
10	Stability and reactivity	It should state if it reacts badly with another chemical	Can contain a lot of information. So try and pick out any key materials where interactions will cause harm e.g. mixing bleach and acids
11	Toxicology information	Lots of animal test data and some human.	Not usually expressed in a useful manner for non chemists/toxicologists
12	Ecological information	Any adverse environmental impacts	Can be non-specific, but look out for products where a little of the material can devastate local water systems
13	Disposal methods	Mainly generic advice	The disposal of chemicals is a specialist's job. So use someone who can do the job legally and safely
14	Transport information	The legal requirements for transport	Lots of irrelevant information for users of the product. However, you will need this if you intend to transport the material
15	Regulatory information	This is the most useful section for users of the product. Regard these as cardinal rules	Watch out for foreign classification, such as American, that can cause confusion. You need the UK or EU section
16	Other information	Not usually useful	Contains legal phrases and caveats often spelling out the user's responsibility