

COSHH – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

What is a Hazardous Substance?

Substances (including chemicals) may be hazardous in various forms. If they enter the body they can then cause harm

For example:

- Dusty or fume-laden air can cause lung diseases, eg in welders, quarry workers or woodworkers.
- Metalworking fluids can grow bacteria and fungi which cause dermatitis and asthma.
- Flowers, bulbs, fruit and vegetables can cause dermatitis.
- Wet working, eg catering and cleaning, can cause dermatitis.
- Benzene in oils and fuels can cause leukaemia.
- Exposure to certain sensitising agents can cause asthma.



Many other products or substances used at work can be harmful, such as paint, ink, glue, lubricant, detergent and beauty products.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended) (COSHH) is the key piece of legislation requiring employers to prevent harmful exposure to substances in the UK.

The Isle of Man Government apply this as best practice.

Employers must assess any work involving a hazardous substance before commencement and implement adequate controls to minimise or eliminate risk.

This is particularly vital for the most hazardous categories of materials, i.e.:

- carcinogens (cancer causing materials)
- asthmagens (substances which are sensitising when inhaled resulting in occupational asthma)

Did You Know?

Fact 1

Ill health caused by substances including chemicals and dusts cause around 13,000 deaths per year.

Fact 2

There are around 1,000 new cases of occupational dermatitis per year.



- substances which can cause damage to the unborn child or damage to genetic material.

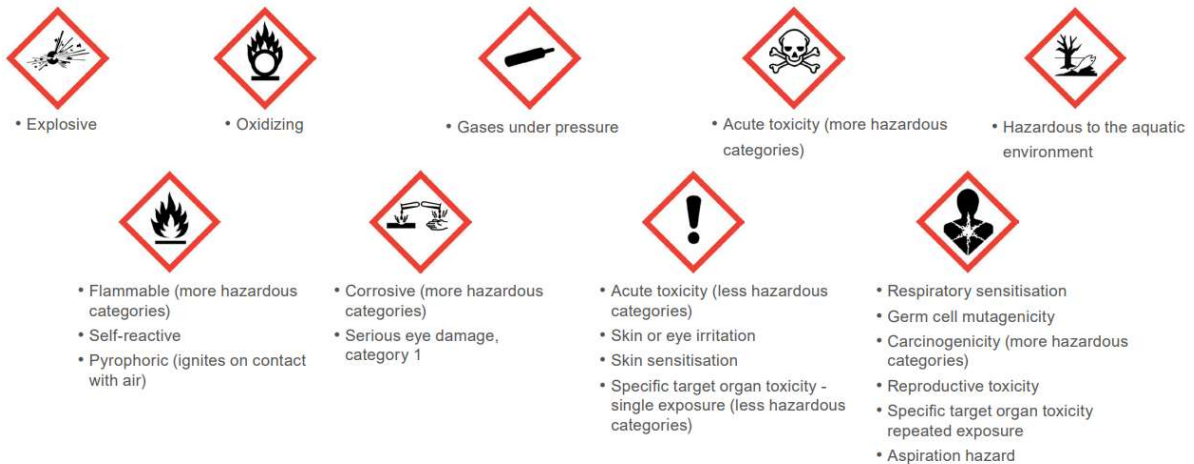
Identifying the risk

- Does your work involve the use of hazardous substances, or are these produced as by-products?
- Do you know where you can find safety information including safety data sheets and COSHH Assessments?
- Are you aware of the measures your employer has put in place to protect you, including ventilation and the use of protective clothing?
- Do you suffer from ill health which you feel may be related to, or made worse by, the substances you are using (eg dermatitis or asthma)?

“Many other products or substances used at work can be harmful, such as paint, ink, glue, lubricant, detergent and beauty products”

If you aren't sure of the answers to these questions, speak with your supervisor or manager. You should also speak to your manager if you are pregnant or planning to have a baby to ensure that any chemical safety risks which could affect you are identified and managed.

Hazardous substances carry information on the label and this includes pictograms and warnings. The pictograms are below.



Always read the labels as these will describe more precisely the type of hazard. Your employers COSHH assessment will contain details of the precautions to be taken.

