



**Arrow**  
COUNTY SUPPLIES



**Arrow County's  
Essential Guide  
to the Control of  
Substances  
Hazardous to  
Health Regulations  
(COSHH) - Part 1**

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The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) law, originally created in 2002, requires employers to control substances which can be damaging to the health of their workforce. It is essential that employers understand and put these regulations into practise, to prevent unnecessary and avoidable harm to employees within their organisation.

Part 1 of this guide will explain the key features of COSHH policy clearly and simply, and will provide essential basic information to help ensure you are protecting your staff properly.

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### **About the author**

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Edward collaborate with customers to understand and define their challenges in achieving cleaning and hygiene standards, and then delivers innovative solutions, be it through products or services.

He works with frontline cleaning teams and management teams, work forces and executives to ensure customer-driven solutions.



**611,000 self-reported injuries  
occurred at work during  
2014/2015**



## Why is COSHH so important?

- ▶ Illnesses caused by hazardous substances in the workplace are extremely costly to:
  - The industry – to find a replacement for that experienced worker
  - The individual – who may lose their job, or be forced to take long periods of sick leave
  - Society in general – for the cost of medications, therapies and disability funding
- ▶ Recent statistics from the Health and Safety Executive give an idea of the scale of the problem in Great Britain:
  - There are currently 1.2 million people suffering from a work-related illness or injury
  - The estimated cost of injuries and illness directly related to working conditions is £14.3 billion (2013/2014)
- ▶ It is important to recognise that protecting your staff also protects the reputation and profits of your organisation.

**27.3 million working days  
lost due to work-related  
illness and workplace  
injury during 2014/2015**

## **Common misconceptions about COSHH in the workplace**

- ▶ 'Long-standing practises must be safe' – some diseases progress and develop slowly; just because the effects aren't immediate doesn't mean they won't emerge over time.
- ▶ 'Substances derived from natural sources cannot be harmful' – consider the risks of dust from wood or stone, as well as flour and pollen from plant sources.
- ▶ 'Most people don't come into contact with harmful substances at work' – the reality is that most people do come into contact with these substances, often without realising it. A good example of a less obvious exposure might be the risk of the chemicals used to clean the space in which you work.
- ▶ 'Some jobs are inevitably dirty in nature' – this doesn't have to be the case. By using the correct procedures and protective equipment, tasks can be kept clean and the risks reduced.

## **How can you combat the risk of hazardous substances?**

- ▶ Make a risk assessment plan – document the risks you have identified in your workplace and the steps you have taken to reduce them.
- ▶ Train your employees – how to store and use specific substances, how to control their exposure, and what to do if things go wrong.
- ▶ Provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g. gloves and masks, to all staff at risk of harm.
- ▶ Review your procedures regularly and question your methods - for example, is there a newer, safer alternative to the substance you are using?
- ▶ Provide health checks to your staff as necessary – make sure that if problems do arise, they are treated quickly and effectively.



# How to identify harmful substances and practises

## 1. Consider the task at hand

- ▶ How regularly is the task carried out, and how long does it take to complete?
- ▶ How many people are needed to carry out the task?
- ▶ Does the task need to be carried out in a specific type of environment?
- ▶ Can exposure be prevented altogether, and if not, how can substance control be regulated?
- ▶ What do these factors mean about the overall risk of that substance?
- ▶ What types of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be worn during the task?



## 2. Identify the substance and its potential to cause harm

- ▶ Make sure you read and understand all safety information provided alongside the product.
- ▶ Contact the supplier or manufacturer for more information if necessary.
- ▶ Use internet sources, for example the HSE website, to ensure your practise complies with current regulations.

## 3. Think about exposure

- ▶ Inhalation – damage can occur directly to the airways, or can be absorbed to damage different parts of the body.
- ▶ Swallowing – can arise from liquids splashing, or from residual substance on the hands when eating and drinking.
- ▶ Direct contact with eyes – can occur from dust and gases in the air, or liquids splashing.
- ▶ Direct contact with skin – exposure from a variety of sources, which can either affect the skin directly, or be absorbed through the skin to damage different parts of the body.
- ▶ Skin puncture – from sharp objects and tools contaminated with harmful substances.

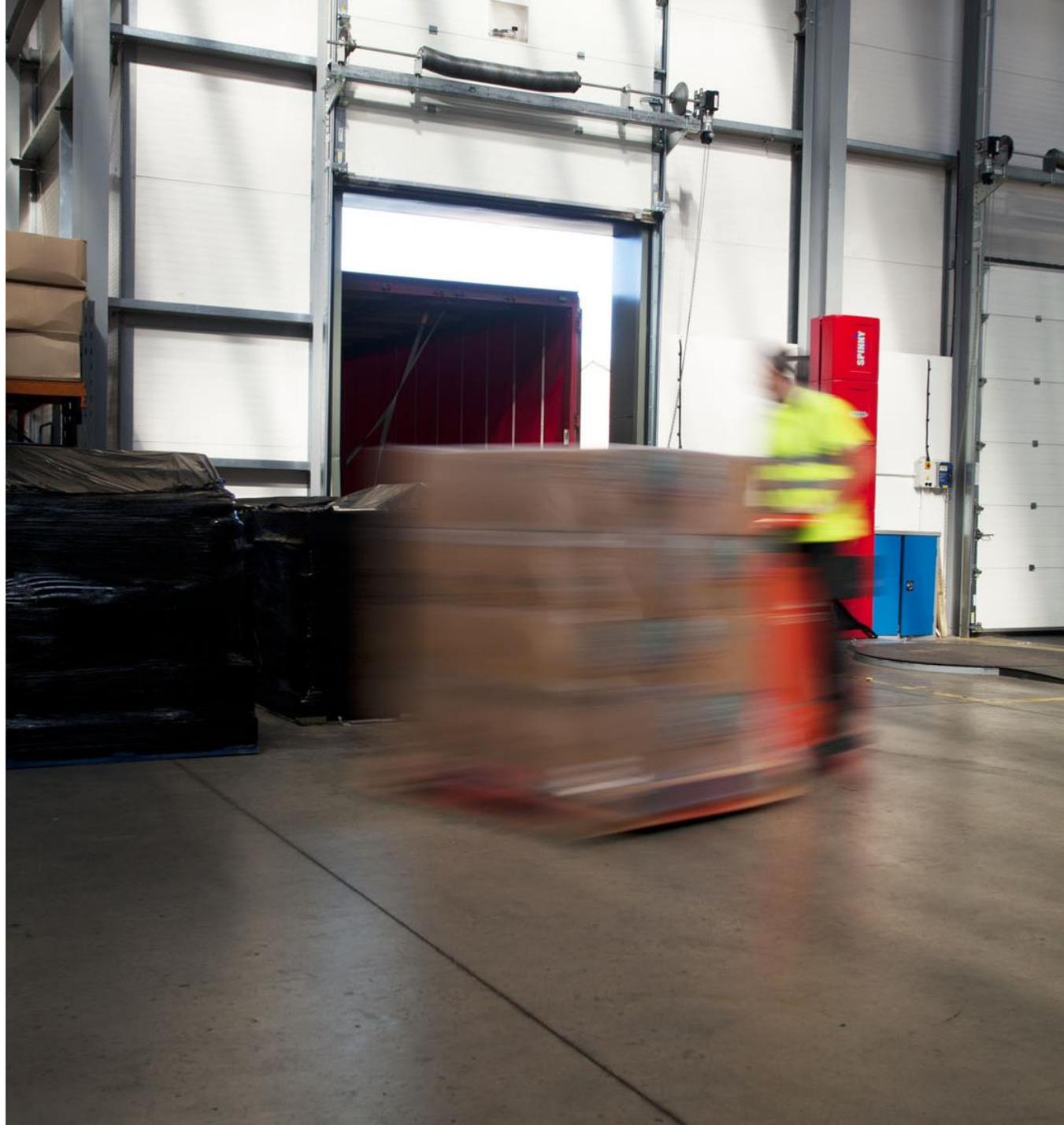
## Hazard symbols you need to be aware of

These new international CLP hazard pictograms were introduced in 2009, and feature on important safety information provided alongside potentially harmful substances.

Symbol	What does it mean?
	Explosive (Symbol: exploding bomb)
	Flammable (Symbol: flame)
	Oxidising (Symbol: flame over circle)
	Corrosive (Symbol: corrosion)
	Acute toxicity (Symbol: skull and crossbones)
	Hazardous to the environment (Symbol: dead tree and fish)
	Health hazard/hazardous to the ozone layer (Symbol: exclamation mark)
	Serious health hazard (Symbol: health hazard)
	Gas under pressure (Symbol: gas cylinder)

**This part of the guide (Part 1) has given you an understanding of the importance of COSHH, and an overview of its basic principles.**

**Progress to Part 2 of the guide, which provides detailed information about COSHH regulations specific to the cleaning industry, and will help you to ensure your workforce is practising the correct procedures and techniques.**





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