



ARROW
COUNTY SUPPLIES

Why Is COSHH Important?

Your guide from Arrow County Supplies

It is essential that employers understand and practise COSHH regulations to prevent unnecessary and avoidable harm to their employees.

This guide explains the key features of a strong COSHH policy, giving you essential basic information that will ensure you are protecting your staff properly.

Why is COSHH 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)

Common COSHH Misconceptions

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 To Identify Harmful Substances & Practises

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?

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.

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.

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