

Toolbox Talk

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)



Hazardous substances are found on many sites and can be used in or created by the construction process. Hazardous substances need to be treated with caution as they can have some nasty knock on effects.

Assess the Risk

A competent person must carry out a risk assessment to decide whether:

- Exposure to a substance can be avoided
- An alternative work method can reduce the exposure
- A less hazardous substance can be used instead.

Any substance with a hazard warning label has the potential to cause harm—the risk must be assessed before it can be used.

Hazards

- Your health could be affected by a hazardous substance through—ingestion, inhalation or absorption.
- Mixing chemicals and substances can create a hazardous substance, be careful and only mix if it is a safe authorised process.

Control Measures

1. Follow the correct guidelines set out in the COSHH assessment
2. Always wear the correct PPE, look after it and make sure you know how to use it
3. Make sure hazardous substances are put back in the correct storage area after use and are not to be left lying around.
4. Don't store hazardous substances above head height

Useful Links

HSE COSHH— <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/>

Key Notes:

- Make sure you are trained to use hazardous substances
- Read and apply with the COSHH assessment and the instructions on the project label
- Don't eat, drink or smoke when handling substances
- Always wash at the end of the shift and before eating
- Don't expose other workers to hazardous fumes or substances

Examples of Hazardous substances:

- Contaminated Ground
- Solvent fumes
- Epoxy-based paints
- Concrete admixtures
- Hardwood dust
- Welding fumes
- Lime
- Asbestos
- Brick and stone dust

Correct PPE

Depending on the hazardous substance the type of PPE worn can change. You must read the COSHH assessment and label on the hazardous substance for further information.

When working with chemicals such as toxic fumes, masks and eye protection should be worn at all times. and adequate ventilation should be provided.