

# S200

## COSHH essentials: Harm via skin or eye contact



This information will help employers comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to chemicals and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet covers general points on skin exposure.

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

# Skin or eye contact

## Control approach S Supplementary advice

### Contact with skin and eyes

- ✓ Full containment is normally needed. Use permits to work to breach containment. Where possible, check the effectiveness of control by monitoring.

### Exposure control

- ✓ Consider substituting a safer chemical or product. If chemical substitution is not possible, reduce the chance of contact with skin or eyes.
- ✓ Reduce the chance of contact with skin or eyes:
  - modify the process to minimise handling;
  - change the physical form – to granules from dusty powders, or to pastes from liquids;
  - segregate clean and dirty areas to reduce the spread of contamination;
  - provide smooth, impervious, easily cleaned surfaces;
  - launder work clothing regularly;
  - provide clean washrooms, with pre-work creams and after-work creams for skin care;
  - tell workers about the risk and about good personal hygiene;
  - check skin for dryness or soreness regularly;
  - clean the workroom regularly;
  - provide eye protection where there are splash risks; and
  - plan how to deal with spillages swiftly and safely.
- ✓ Workers should wash their hands before and after eating, drinking, smoking, using the lavatory or applying cosmetics.
- ✓ See Sheet S101 for advice on selecting protective gloves and S102 for other PPE.

### Containment

- ✓ Prepare a written method statement and use a Permit to Work before breaching containment. If necessary, use PPE and respiratory protective equipment (RPE).
- ✓ Seek advice from a health and safety professional if you are uncertain. See 'Useful links'.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Wear two layers of clothing to reduce the amount of chemicals reaching the skin.
- ✓ Use a contract laundry or a suitable equivalent to wash protective clothing. Warn them what chemicals are on the clothing.
- ✓ Throw away chemical protective gloves at the end of the workday, or the end of the job, whichever is shorter.
- ✓ Use eye protection if dust or splashes of liquid could reach the eye.

### Monitoring

- ✓ Air monitoring may be needed - seek help from a health and safety professional.
- ✓ Biological monitoring shows if workers are taking up chemicals through the skin. You need specialist advice to see if biological monitoring could apply. See 'Further information'.

### Further information

- *Permit-to-work systems* Leaflet INDG98(rev3) HSE Books 1997 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1331 3)
- *Biological monitoring in the workplace: A guide to its practical application to chemical exposure* HSG167 HSE Books 1997 ISBN 0 7176 1279 1

### Useful links

- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at [www.bohs.org](http://www.bohs.org) for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see [www.nhsplus.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsplus.nhs.uk).

### Employee checklist

- Check equipment for damage both before and after use.
- Tell your supervisor if you find anything wrong
- Keep all chemicals off the skin. Wash your hands after touching surfaces that may be contaminated – this includes your personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Co-operate with your employer's procedures for personal hygiene.
- Never take work clothing (coveralls, gloves, footwear) home.
- Make sure you are not absorbing chemicals. Co-operate with monitoring.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.