

OCM7

Offshore COSHH essentials



This information will help offshore duty holders (owners, operators and contractors) to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to protect workers' health.

This guidance consolidates good control practice and reinforces existing knowledge with additional information.

It will help you carry out COSHH assessments, review existing assessments, deliver training and in supervising activities involving substances hazardous to health.

It is useful for personnel whose responsibilities include the management of substances hazardous to health on offshore installations (eg occupational health specialists, COSHH assessors, supervisors etc). It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other equally effective action. By following all the points in this sheet 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.

Health surveillance

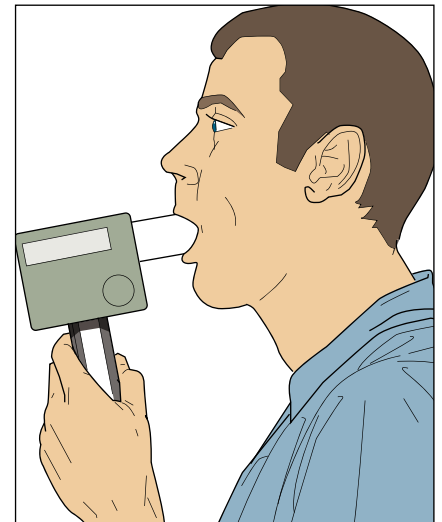
Control approach 4 Special advice

What is health surveillance?

Health surveillance is an integral part of health risk management and involves collecting and using information about workers' health, in relation to the substances they use. It requires a systematic approach for the early detection of disease and follow up action to prevent disease progression as well as regain control to prevent further exposure of others.

Health surveillance is never an alternative to acceptable control of exposure.

The offshore medical shows fitness to work and is NOT health surveillance. However, one conclusion of health surveillance might be that an individual is fit to continue their work.



When is health surveillance required?

- ✓ Health surveillance is appropriate where:
 - exposure to a substance has a known health effect;
 - there is a valid method to detect the disease or condition;
 - it is reasonable to expect that damage to health may occur under the particular conditions in the workplace;
 - surveillance is likely to benefit the employee.

Planning and preparation

- ✓ Identify potential health hazards as part of your COSHH assessments.
- ✓ Establish the work activities, job titles and numbers of workers that may be at risk of the identified health hazards.
- ✓ Decide who needs to be provided with health surveillance.
- ✓ Plan what you are going to do and make sure your employees are aware of your plans.
- ✓ Appoint and involve a competent health professional (doctor, nurse) in developing your health surveillance programme.
- ✓ Appoint a responsible trained person to implement a health surveillance programme with the support of the health professional.

Actions

- ✓ Assess workers' health before they start a relevant job to provide a baseline.
- ✓ Introduce regular testing yearly, or as advised by the health professional. This could involve specific medical surveillance by a health professional and/or questionnaire-based screening by a trained person. Ensure the health professional explains the test results to the individual and reports to you on the worker's fitness to work.
- ✓ Ensure the health professional interprets the results and identify any need to revise the risk assessment.
- ✓ Keep health records, and encourage workers to keep a copy of their results in case they change jobs.
- ✓ Keep simple attendance records to identify any patterns in sick absence.

Low-level health surveillance

- ✓ Lower-level health surveillance is suggested where there is only weak evidence of a hazard and/or there is limited potential for significant exposure, eg low-level health surveillance for a skin irritant may involve a questionnaire carried out by a trained person.

High-level health surveillance

- ✓ Higher-level health surveillance is suggested where the evidence for a hazard is clear and/or there is potential for significant exposure, eg high-level health surveillance for isocyanate paint spraying may involve questionnaire and lung function assessments carried out by a health professional.

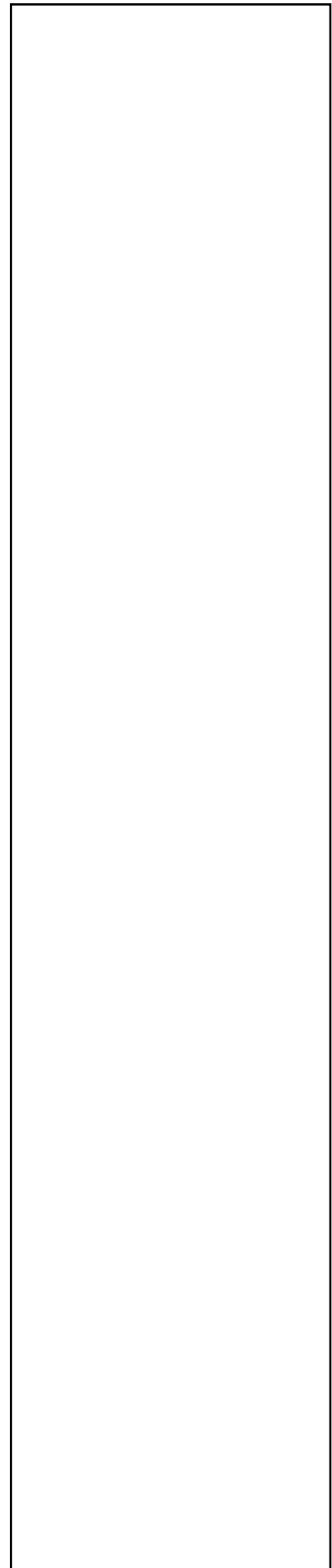
Roles and responsibilities

Dutyholders

- ✓ The duty is on the employer to provide health surveillance, where appropriate.
- ✓ Dutyholder to appoint a competent health professional who is familiar with the industry and the typical range of tasks your employees undertake.
- ✓ Offshore operators and contractors to cooperate and ensure that contractor employees are provided with health surveillance, where appropriate.
- ✓ Employees to take reasonable care to look after their own health by complying with employers arrangements for health surveillance and report symptoms of ill health immediately.

Health professional

- ✓ Advise you on a suitable programme with frequencies and types of surveillance
- ✓ Assess workers' health before they start a relevant job, to provide a baseline.
- ✓ Apply health questionnaires as necessary and make regular tests and clinical observations.
- ✓ Explain the test results and other findings to the individual.



- ✓ Report to you on the individual's fitness to work.
- ✓ Interpret the result trends for groups of workers, provide anonymised feedback and identify any need to revise risk assessments.
- ✓ Advise you on how the overall management of occupational health risks is working and whether any new/additional interventions are needed.
- ✓ Identify adaptations to work required or limitations on exposure.
- ✓ Arrange for referral for diagnosis/treatment as appropriate.
- ✓ Follow the basic principles of occupational health and good medical practice of the General Medical Council.

Responsible person

- ✓ To help in identifying health surveillance needs.
- ✓ To carry out low-level health surveillance for asthma and dermatitis.
- ✓ To keep health records, and encourage workers to keep their own record in case they change jobs.
- ✓ Keep simple attendance records to identify any patterns in sick absence.

Health records

- ✓ You should keep a health record for each worker with:
 - the activities that can cause ill health;
 - the worker's name, home address and National Insurance number;
 - processes or products they work on, and how often;
 - protective measures provided;
 - date of starting work with the process or product;
 - a 'Fitness for Work' statement.
- ✓ Should not contain any medical-in-confidence information.

Medical records

- ✓ The occupational health provider will keep medical records. This information is confidential and must not be released to the employer unless the employee has given explicit and informed consent.

Useful links

Occupational Safety and Health
Consultants Register
www.oshcr.org/

Further information

Asthma
www.hse.gov.uk/asthma/index.htm

COPD
www.hse.gov.uk/copd/index.htm

Skin diseases
www.hse.gov.uk/skin/index.htm

Guidance on health surveillance
Energy Institute
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You can find the full Offshore
COSHH essentials series at
www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm

This guidance was developed by representatives from the UK offshore oil and gas industry and trade unions, with HSE.