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COSHH essentials for printers



This information is intended to help employers in the printing industry comply with the requirements of 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.

Health surveillance for occupational dermatitis

Supplementary advice

What is occupational dermatitis?

Occupational dermatitis is a skin disease that is related to work. Common symptoms include:

- skin redness or soreness;
- itching;
- rash;
- cracking or peeling.

Why do I need to do health surveillance for dermatitis?

You are using chemical products that cause dermatitis, a common health problem. An estimated 10% of printers have the problem now; and 40% have had the problem at some time. If left untreated, dermatitis can become **irreversible**, so a very small amount can trigger a reaction.

If you detect the first signs of a worker's skin disease early enough and halt exposure to the substance responsible, you will minimise the consequences.

Solvents on the skin make other chemicals more likely to cause skin damage.

What is health surveillance for dermatitis?

Surveillance is collecting and using information about workers' health and the substances used. It helps prevent dermatitis by detecting the early signs, and also keeps workers aware of skin care and the potential for dermatitis.

Surveillance for dermatitis consists of:

- assessing workers' skin condition as soon as possible after starting work, eg within six weeks;
- examining the skin (usually hands and forearms) regularly, eg every few months, and asking workers about their skin condition;
- keeping a record.

Note: Health screening or health promotion schemes are not health surveillance.

Who needs health surveillance for dermatitis?

Everyone working with UV-curable inks or isocyanates, or using products labelled R43 (may cause sensitisation by skin contact) or R42/43 (may cause sensitisation by inhalation and skin contact).

This does **not** include workers in offices attached to print shops.

What specialist help do I need?

Look in Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for occupational physicians (doctors and nurses). Also see www.nhsplus.nhs.uk. The occupational doctor or nurse will tell you what to do, and how to do it.

Surveillance for dermatitis will cost around £20 per worker for each examination.

Record-keeping

Record the fact that your workers need surveillance for dermatitis. Note down the products that can cause dermatitis.

Also record:

- the worker's name, address and National Insurance number;
- the products they work with or the process, and how often they do this work;
- the protective measures used (gloves, skin creams etc);
- the date of starting work with the products or process.

Retain these records for 40 years.

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.