

WL13

COSHH essentials for welding, hot work and allied processes



This information will help employers (including the self-employed) comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

Welding fume can cause lung disease, with an increased risk of asthma and cancer.

This sheet describes good practice using general ventilation.

It covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

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

The advice does not apply to high-alloy and stainless steels; alloys containing chromium, nickel, manganese, barium, lead, or cobalt; painted or coated metal, alloys containing cadmium or beryllium, or to hand-held resistance welding equipment.

Main points

- Dust and fume can cause serious lung diseases.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet.
- Health monitoring is usually needed. See sheet G401.

Resistance (spot) welding: Fixed equipment

Control approach 1 General ventilation

Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow access to authorised staff.

Equipment

- ✓ Provide a good standard of general ventilation; 5-10 air changes per hour, with a through draught.
- ✓ Use fume extraction for welding through coatings other than zinc.

Procedures

- ✓ Remove grease and all surface coatings first, unless they are meant to be welded or cut through.
- ✓ Confirm that any ventilation fans are turned on and working.

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Follow the instructions in the manual - keep equipment in effective and efficient working order.
- ✓ If any equipment is faulty, repair it straight away.
- ✓ Daily, look for signs of damage.
- ✓ Get a competent ventilation engineer to examine the system thoroughly and test its performance regularly.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.
- ✓ Review records - failure patterns show where preventive maintenance is needed.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Ask your safety equipment supplier to help you get the right PPE.
- ✓ Provide storage for clean and contaminated PPE.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ RPE should not be needed.

Other protective equipment

- ✓ Provide and ensure that workers use flame-resistant overalls and protective gloves.
- ✓ Use a properly equipped contract laundry or a suitable equivalent to wash work clothing.
- ✓ Skin creams help in washing contamination from the skin. After-work creams help to replace skin oils.

Caution: Never allow use of compressed air for removing dust from clothing.

Health monitoring

- ✓ You should consider health monitoring. See sheet G401.
- ✓ Consult an occupational health professional - see 'Useful links'.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Keep the work area clean and free of combustible materials.
- ✓ Clean the general workroom once a week.

Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell workers that fume from welding and cutting can cause serious lung diseases.
- ✓ Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet WLO.

Further information

- *General ventilation in the workplace: Guidance for employers* HSG202 HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1793 9
- For environmental guidelines see sheet WLO

Useful links

- Your trade association may advise on health and safety consultants and training providers.
- For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.
- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at 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.

This document is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/ and www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/

This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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Employee checklist

- Do you know how to use the controls properly?
- Use, maintain and store your protective equipment in accordance with instructions.
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor. Don't just carry on working.
- Co-operate with health monitoring.
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking, or using the lavatory.
- Never clean your hands with solvents or concentrated cleaning products.
- Use skin creams provided as instructed.