COSHH essentials:
Survey of firms purchasing this guidance

Prepared by
Bostock Marketing Group
for the Health and Safety Executive

CONTRACT RESEARCH REPORT
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In January 2001, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commissioned Bostock Marketing Group Ltd. to undertake a survey amongst employers and organisations that have purchased a copy of the COSHH Essentials guidance document. The key aim in carrying out the survey was to assess if COSHH Essentials is helping to improve chemical control among small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who have bought a copy of the guidance.

500 interviews were undertaken over the telephone, in the first instance with the named contact, or person with dedicated responsibility for health and safety at that site. Interviews took place during February and March 2001. The target sample for the survey was Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), defined as establishments with up to 249 employees at the site of interview. In addition, eight qualitative interviews were conducted to provide depth of analysis.

A sample of 500 has a maximum associated sampling error of +/-4.4% at the 95% degree of confidence.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Organisational profile
Purchase of COSHH Essentials
Use of COSHH Essentials
Evaluation of COSHH Essentials
Development of COSHH Essentials
Key conclusions

INTRODUCTION
Background
Methodology
Sampling
Report contents

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE
Number of employees
Standard industrial classification
Status of business
Length of time trading
Familiarity with COSHH 1999
Job title
Qualitative interviews

PURCHASE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS
Initial source of awareness
COSHH Essentials workshops

USE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS
Purposes of use
Non-users of COSHH Essentials
The COSHH Essentials assessment system
The control guidance sheets
Action taken as a result of using COSHH Essentials

EVALUATION OF COSHH ESSENTIALS
Outcome of using COSHH Essentials
Recommendation of COSHH Essentials

DEVELOPMENT OF COSHH ESSENTIALS
Computerised training package
Internet versions of COSHH Essentials
Suggestions for improvement
Occupational hygienist visit

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS
Industrial classifications

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE EMPLOYED

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLING ERRORS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In January 2001, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commissioned Bostock Marketing Group Ltd. to undertake a survey amongst employers and organisations that have purchased a copy of the COSHH Essentials guidance document. The key aim in carrying out the survey was to assess if COSHH Essentials is helping to improve chemical control among small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who have bought a copy of the guidance.

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A sample of 500 has a maximum associated sampling error of +/-4.4% at the 95% degree of confidence.

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

COSHH Essentials was designed to meet a need amongst small businesses for practical guidance to help them comply with the COSHH Regulations, and the current research was restricted to Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (defined for the purposes of the survey as firms with up to 249 employees at the site of interview).

The survey suggests that in fact, smaller firms are under-represented amongst purchasers of COSHH Essentials. This may be because larger firms are more likely to employ an individual (or even a department) with dedicated responsibility for Health and Safety, and may therefore be more likely to be aware of such publications as COSHH Essentials. This may suggest that more targeted promotion of COSHH Essentials is required for smaller firms.

Purchasers of COSHH Essentials include a considerably higher proportion of manufacturers than the overall population of employer establishments across Great Britain\(^1\), whilst service industries are generally under-represented. In total, more than half of the firms in the sample operate in production and construction sectors, whilst approaching a third are traded services firms, and the remaining one in six are public services organisations (see appendix for definitions).

The majority of establishments in the sample have been trading at the site of interview for considerable time. More than two-fifths have been trading at that site for 20 years or more, whilst only a small minority are recent start-ups. Almost half of the sample is made up of single site organisations with no other establishments, although approaching one in three establishments in the sample are branches.

\(^1\) Annual Business Inquiry 1999
Less than one in ten respondents were unfamiliar with the COSHH Regulations 1999 before finding out about COSHH Essentials, whilst just over half feel they were moderately familiar, and more than two-fifths feel they were very familiar with the Regulations. Whilst the proportion of firms unfamiliar with the Regulations is fairly consistent across different sub-samples, the proportion that feel they were very familiar with the Regulations varies. For example, more than half of the micro-firms (with up to ten employees) and larger firms (with between 200 and 249 employees) in the sample say they are very familiar with the Regulations, whilst only a third of firms with between 50 and 99 employees at that site are so confident of their knowledge.

**PURCHASE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS**

By far the most frequent source from which survey respondents became aware of COSHH Essentials is via HSE leaflets, mentioned by approaching three-quarters of respondents to the survey. There are a number of other sources, the most important being adverts and the HSE telephone service, although none of these account for more than one in five respondents.

Approximately one in eight survey respondents has attended a seminar or workshop on COSHH Essentials. A wide range of organisations are credited with running events covering COSHH Essentials, notably the HSE and British Safety Council.

**USE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS**

Almost all of the respondents say they have looked at their copy of COSHH Essentials since receiving it, and more than three-quarters have actually used the pack. Smaller firms are more likely to have used the guidance.

Just over a fifth of the sample have not used COSHH Essentials since receiving it. The most common reason for this is that the firm already has COSHH assessments and controls in place, suggesting that the guidance was purchased as a reference document. However, one in four of these firms have not done so due to having been too busy, or simply not getting round to it, and one in six have found that COSHH Essentials is not relevant to their workplace.

Amongst those firms that have used COSHH Essentials, approaching three-fifths started by following the assessment system, whilst just over a third went straight to the task-specific guidance sheets. Only a minority of those firms that proceeded with the COSHH Essentials assessment system experienced any problems whilst using the assessment system. Firms that experienced problems with the assessment system are most likely to have run into trouble at step 4 of the process (selecting the appropriate task-specific control guidance sheet). Step 2C (deciding how volatile liquids are) also appears to have caused many of these problems. The nature of the problems encountered is varied, but largely concerns the complexity of the information provided.

Overall, however, it is clear that those firms that have attempted to proceed through the assessment system have found it reasonably straightforward. More than four-fifths of these respondents rate the assessment system as fairly or very easy, and less than one in twenty rate it as fairly difficult.
The majority of firms that have used COSHH Essentials were able to select the right control guidance sheet for their needs. Only a small minority of those firms that selected the correct guidance sheet can recall the exact guidance sheet that they used. Most commonly the tasks the sheets were used for are general in nature, such as consulting the pack for advice or principles, although a sizeable proportion of respondents have consulted the sheets for information on ventilation, storage, personal protective equipment, dust extraction, and containment.

Nine-tenths of firms that used the guidance feel that the general control guidance and the task specific guidance sheets contained the information they needed, although one in ten disagree.

Where additional information was required, firms are most likely to feel that they required more specialised or specific information, although in contrast, some firms feel they require more general information.

However, the great majority of firms found the format of the general control guidance clear and easy to follow. Once again there is very little variance across the sample.

More than three-quarters of the firms that have used COSHH Essentials since they received it have taken some action as a result of using the guidance. This equates to almost two-thirds of those that have actually looked at COSHH Essentials since receiving it, and to three-fifths of the sample as a whole. Overall, therefore, two-fifths of firms have taken no action as a result of purchasing COSHH Essentials.

The most frequent action firms have taken is to check that existing control measures are working, whilst approaching half have provided training or information to workers. Respondents that have not taken any action as a result of using COSHH Essentials are most likely to say that this is because they have decided that their existing measures are sufficient, suggesting that they have at least checked their existing measures and found them satisfactory. Since the HSE classifies checking that existing measures are sufficient as taking action, it can be concluded that overall, almost three-quarters of firms that have purchased COSHH Essentials have taken action as a result of doing so.

The reasons given for taking no action as a result of using COSHH Essentials reflect those given earlier in the survey by firms that have not used the guidance. An analysis of both sets of findings suggests that just over one in twenty firms that purchase the guidance find that the pack is not relevant to their work, whilst a small minority use it for reference only, or find the pack too complex.

**EVALUATION OF COSHH ESSENTIALS**

The majority of respondents that have used COSHH Essentials agree that as a result of using the pack, they know how to do a risk assessment for chemical health risks, they are confident in their risk assessments, and that they know how to control chemical health risks in the workplace. Fewer, approximately half, feel that COSHH Essentials has helped them to train people in the workplace, although this may reflect the fact that most respondents have direct responsibility for health and safety rather than training in their workplace. Encouragingly, only a minority feel that they need more help to control chemical risks in their workplace after having used COSHH Essentials.
The great majority of respondents say that they would recommend COSHH Essentials to other businesses. A number of respondents that would not recommend the guidance publication say that this is because they themselves have not yet looked through the guidance, and so cannot offer an informed evaluation. Others feel that the guidance is insufficiently specific.

DEVELOPMENT OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

Approximately half of the sample say they would be interested in using a computerised COSHH Essentials training package, on disk or CD ROM. This relatively lukewarm reception may reflect the fact that very few respondents experienced any problems using the system, were unable to select the correct sheet, or feel that the system was not easy to use.

The great majority of firms in the sample have Internet access at the site of interview. Amongst the minority of firms without Internet access, approximately one in three are planning to have Internet access at that site in the future. In total, it is likely that up to 95% of firms purchasing COSHH Essentials in future will have access to the Internet.

Firms that have Internet access, or who are planning to have Internet access in the future, were asked whether they would be interested in using an intelligent, interactive Internet version of COSHH Essentials on an HSE web-site that could help them to choose the correct control measures. Two-thirds of these firms express interest, suggesting that there is a solid foundation of support for the development of such a product.

As one might expect, respondents that have used COSHH Essentials since purchase are more likely to express interest in an Internet version, although almost three-fifths of firms that have not used the guidance (and who have, or plan to have, Internet access) would be interested in an online version.

These respondents were also asked whether they would be interested in an Internet version of COSHH Essentials that included environmental and chemical safety advice as well as health matters. There is an even higher level of support for such an ‘extended’ online version of COSHH Essentials. Approaching three-quarters of firms that have or plan to have Internet access express interest in such a product.

Respondents were invited to make suggestions for ways in which COSHH Essentials could be improved. Many feel that the pack is insufficiently specific or specialised for their needs, although in contrast, a number of respondents feel that a simplified version of COSHH Essentials would be useful.

Perhaps reflecting the perceived complexity and or lack of specificity of COSHH Essentials, a number of respondents commented that the pack appears to be targeted at larger firms rather than small units. Several respondents mentioned that they would like to receive updates on the guidance, and others voiced their support for an electronic version of the guidance. Many suggestions, largely industry-specific, were made for further information respondents would like to see included in COSHH Essentials.

More than one in three firms that took part in the survey are interested in receiving a visit from an occupational hygienist. As one might expect, those that have used the guidance are more likely to express interest in such a visit, although more than one in five of those that have not used the guidance are also interested.
KEY CONCLUSIONS

Very small firms make up a smaller proportion of purchasers of COSHH Essentials than the overall population of firms in Great Britain. This suggests that the guidance may not be hitting the smallest firms in its target market. Indeed some smaller firms appear to perceive the guidance as aimed at larger firms. These smaller firms may be less likely to have an employee with dedicated responsibility for health and safety, and hence lack the broader awareness of larger firms of Health and Safety issues and support.

The sample is made up largely of manufacturing firms. It is clear that most respondents to the survey have found the guidance useful. However, several comment that they perceive the guidance to be irrelevant to their own industrial sector, and the way they use substances that are hazardous to health.

Most firms were familiar with the COSHH 1999 Regulations before becoming aware of the COSHH Essentials guidance.

Leaflets are the most important source of awareness of the guidance, with no more than a fifth of respondents citing any other source. This may indicate that there is scope to increase the impact of advertising for the guidance.

COSHH Essentials is often purchased as a reference document, used mostly to check existing measures. Only about two-fifths progress through the assessment system.

Problems experienced by respondents and their suggestions for improvement to the guidance reveal two points of view. Firstly, those who feel the manual is not sufficiently specific for the work they do, and secondly, those who require more general, simpler guidance and on the legislation. It may be that a single publication cannot achieve both of these aims.

Overall, very few respondents to the survey have experienced any problems with the guidance. COSHH Essentials is generally considered easy to use, and most would recommend it to other businesses.
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In January 2001, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commissioned Bostock Marketing Group Ltd. to undertake a survey amongst employers and organisations that have purchased a copy of the COSHH Essentials guidance document.

COSHH Essentials was developed as part of the HSE’s efforts to communicate with companies struggling to implement suitable controls on chemicals. It was designed to meet a need amongst small businesses for practical guidance to help them comply with the COSHH Regulations. COSHH Essentials contains a step by step process to lead those with little or no expertise in identifying the correct method of control for the chemical in use and the task in hand. It contains 60 control guidance sheets giving specific advice for common industrial tasks such as weighing, mixing and filling.

The key aim in carrying out the survey was as follows:

“To assess if COSHH Essentials is helping to improve chemical control among small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who have bought a copy of COSHH Essentials.”

Broadly, the aim of the research was to better understand the COSHH Essentials audience, and specifically:

- To understand how to reach relevant firms more effectively;
- To identify who is ordering and using the guidance within companies, e.g. managers, safety representatives;
- To examine any problems users of COSHH Essentials may have found in applying the guidance to their work;
- To identify areas where COSHH Essentials needs improvement;
- To identify any additional information respondents would like to be included in COSHH Essentials;
- To explore potential for an internet version of COSHH Essentials;
- To select firms for possible follow-up visits by an occupational hygienist to examine the use of COSHH Essentials in the workplace.

METHODOLOGY

All interviews were undertaken over the telephone, in the first instance with the named contact, or person with dedicated responsibility for health and safety at that site. During the interview, confirmation was sought that this was the end user for whom COSHH Essentials was purchased. If this was not the case, the interview was continued with the intended end user.

Interviews took place during February and March 2001. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes.
In addition to the quantitative survey, eight qualitative interviews were conducted to provide analytical depth.

**SAMPLING**

The target sample for the survey was Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), defined as establishments with up to 249 employees at the site of interview.

The HSE provided a database of purchasers of COSHH Essentials. In order to provide some indication of the industry and size profile of firms purchasing COSHH Essentials, this database was cross-referenced against business directories to provide information on the number of employees, and the Standard Industrial Classification 1992 (SIC 92) of firms on the database.

This exercise provided an approximately 47% match. As more than half of the records on the database remained unclassified in terms of either size or industry, a further exercise was carried out by BMG to improve the quality of the profile information on the database. BMG contacted a sample of ‘unmatched’ firms to gather size and SIC 92 information.

Following this second matching exercise, the database consisted of 2,936 records, of which 1,593 included both size and SIC 92, 264 included either size or SIC 92, and 1,343 included neither size nor SIC 92 information.

Since it was recognised that no firm conclusions regarding the profile of the sample could be drawn based on the available industry and size information, the sample of 500 interviews was drawn largely from those records that included this information, but included a minority (19 interviews) drawn from records without industry and size information.

Following fieldwork, an analysis of the industry and size information gathered during the survey was made against the same information held on the database. This analysis revealed that the database information was largely unreliable and inaccurate. For this reason, it was decided not to weight the data, as there is no source of information on the profile of COSHH Essentials customers more reliable than the survey sample itself.

A sample of 500 has a maximum associated sampling error of +/-4.4% at the 95% degree of confidence. Further information on sampling error is included as an appendix to this report.

**REPORT CONTENTS**

This report contains a written analysis of the findings of the survey. An additional document has been prepared containing cross-tabulations of the data by size of organisation (number of employees), status of organisation; length of time trading; Standard Industrial Classification 1992; industry sector; respondent’s job title; use of COSHH Essentials; familiarity with COSHH Essentials; and interest in Occupational Hygienist visit.

The questionnaire employed is presented in an appendix to this report.

A disk containing the data on SPSS for Windows is available separately.
COSHH Essentials was designed to meet a need amongst small businesses for practical guidance to help them comply with the COSHH Regulations, and the current research was restricted to Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (defined for the purposes of the survey as firms with up to 249 employees at the site of interview). The figure below presents a comparison of the survey sample with the profile of employer establishments across Great Britain.

The figures suggest that in fact, smaller firms are under-represented amongst purchasers of COSHH Essentials. This may be because larger firms are more likely to employ an individual (or even a department) with dedicated responsibility for Health and Safety, and may therefore be more likely to be aware of such publications as COSHH Essentials. This may suggest that more targeted promotion of COSHH Essentials is required for smaller firms.

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2 Annual Business Enquiry 1999
STANDARD INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

The figure below illustrates the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 1992) of firms purchasing COSHH Essentials, at the site of interview. As the figure reveals, purchasers of COSHH Essentials include a considerably higher proportion of manufacturers than the overall population of employer establishments across Great Britain\(^3\), whilst service industries are generally under-represented, particularly wholesale and retail and repair of motor vehicles.

![Figure 2: Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 1992) of company at that site (all respondents)](image)

In total, more than half of the firms in the sample operate in production and construction sectors (53%; GB 18%), whilst approaching a third are traded services firms (32%; GB 64%), and the remaining one in six are public services organisations (15%; GB 18%) (see appendix for definitions).

It is perhaps predictable that service industries comprise a smaller proportion of purchasers of COSHH Essentials than of the employer profile of Great Britain as a whole. Those service industries that are included in the sample are largely made up of ‘other business activities’, a category which includes both consultancy activities and users of chemicals such as industrial cleaners and photographic activities. Wholesale is another relatively important service sector amongst purchasers of the guidance.

Micro-firms, with up to ten employees, are significantly more likely than larger firms and than the sample average to operate in real estate, renting and business activities (36%)

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\(^3\) Annual Business Inquiry 1999
STATUS OF BUSINESS

The sample is largely made up of single site organisations with no other establishments (45%), although approaching one in three establishments in the sample are branches (30%).

As one might expect, micro-firms, with up to ten employees, are more likely to be single site organisations (75%), and less likely to be headquarters (13%), whilst the larger firms in the sample (with between 200 and 249 employees at that site) are more likely to be headquarters (49%), and less likely to be single sites (14%).
Table 1
Status of business at that site, by number of employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employees at that site</th>
<th>1 – 10</th>
<th>11 – 49</th>
<th>50 – 99</th>
<th>100 – 199</th>
<th>200 – 249</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A single site organisation with no other establishments

|                           | 75     | 47      | 38      | 25        | 14        |

A branch, subsidiary or division with a headquarters elsewhere in Great Britain

|                           | 10     | 24      | 32      | 30        | 26        |

A branch, subsidiary or division with a headquarters outside Great Britain

|                           | 3      | 6       | 8       | 10        | 11        |

A regional or divisional headquarters with branches elsewhere

|                           | 13     | 23      | 22      | 35        | 49        |

Sample bases (111) (168) (98) (88) (35)

Multi-site organisations (branches and headquarters) were asked how many sites their organisation has in total. The figure below illustrates the findings.

Figure 4
Number of sites organisation has in total (multi-site organisations)
LENGTH OF TIME TRADING

The majority of establishments in the sample have been trading at the site of interview for considerable time. More than two-fifths have been trading at that site for 20 years or more (44%), whilst only a small minority are recent start-ups (3% have been trading for up to 2 years). However, approximately one in seven have been established at that site relatively recently (14% have been trading at the site of interview for less than 5 years).

As one might expect, smaller firms are more likely to have been trading for a relatively short time. Almost one in four of those with up to ten employees have been established within the last 5 years (23%).

By industry sector, traded services firms are more likely to be recently established. More than one in five establishments in this sector has been trading for less than 5 years (21%).

FAMILIARITY WITH COSHH 1999

Only a minority of respondents were unfamiliar with the COSHH Regulations 1999 before finding out about COSHH Essentials (6%), whilst just over half feel they were moderately familiar (51%), and more than two-fifths feel they were very familiar with the Regulations (43%). Whilst the proportion of firms unfamiliar with the Regulations is fairly consistent across different sub-samples, the proportion that feel they were very familiar with the Regulations varies. For example, micro-firms, with up to ten employees, and larger firms, with between 200 and 249 employees, are more likely to say they were very familiar with the Regulations (51% and 57% respectively), whilst firms with between 50 and 99 employees at that site are less likely to be so confident of their knowledge (33%).
Interestingly, by industry sector, firms operating in production and construction are least likely to feel that they were very familiar with the Regulations prior to becoming aware of the guidance (38%), whilst public service organisations are more likely to feel this way (54%).

**JOB TITLE**

The following analysis represents the distribution of job titles of those making the initial purchase of COSHH Essentials. As part of the survey, interviewers verified that the respondent was the intended end user of COSHH Essentials, and so the following analysis reflects the distribution of job titles of the intended end users of COSHH Essentials.

![Figure 6](image)

**Respondent’s job title (all respondents)**

**QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS**

Activities undertaken by the eight firms interviewed in the qualitative stage of the research include the manufacturer of refrigeration equipment casings, the research, development and design of packaging for perishable and non-perishable products, the manufacture of food packaging, fork lift truck building and repair, veterinary histology and microbiological analysis, the manufacture and distribution of inorganic chemicals, the supply of laboratory equipment, and the manufacture of commercial and garden fertilisers.
PURCHASE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

INITIAL SOURCE OF AWARENESS

By far the most frequent source from which survey respondents became aware of COSHH Essentials is via HSE leaflets (71%). There are a number of other sources, although none of these account for more than one in five respondents. The figure below illustrates initial source of awareness of COSHH Essentials (multiple responses were permitted).

HSE leaflets appear to be a more important source of awareness for larger firms than for very small establishments, although this difference is not significant. More than three-quarters of sites with between 100 and 199 staff learnt of COSHH Essentials via this route (78%), compared with just over two-thirds of those with up to 10 employees (69%).
Table 2
Initial sources of awareness of COSHH Essentials, by number of employees (prompted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1 – 10 %</th>
<th>11 – 49 %</th>
<th>50 – 99 %</th>
<th>100 – 199 %</th>
<th>200 – 249 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSE leaflets etc.</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE telephone service</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a colleague</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a trade association</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a business contact</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a training provider</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a consultant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers of chemical products</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible care cell</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a trade union</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample bases: (111) (168) (98) (88) (35)

Firms with 50 staff or more are more likely to name multiple sources of awareness, suggesting that these firms have a broader base of media from which they become aware of relevant issues and publications.

Recent start-ups (establishments trading at that site for less than 2 years) are considerably less likely to have found out about COSHH Essentials from HSE leaflets (43%), and more likely to have become aware of the publication via advertising (36%). However, it should be noted that due to the small number of these firms these variations are not statistically significant.

Respondents who were unfamiliar with the COSHH 1999 regulations prior to the survey are considerably less likely to have become aware of COSHH Essentials via HSE leaflets etc. (38%), and more likely than average to have heard of the publication from a colleague (34%). It may be that in these cases, the end user of COSHH has direct involvement with the substances in question and was made aware of the guidance by a colleague with a greater role and responsibility in Health and Safety. This would explain a relative lack of awareness of developments in Health and Safety generally.
COSHH ESSENTIALS WORKSHOPS

Approximately one in eight survey respondents has attended a seminar or workshop on COSHH Essentials (13%). By size, respondents from establishments with between 50 and 99 staff are most likely to have done so (19%), whilst by type of establishment, respondents from headquarters are most likely to have done so (20%). By industry, employees of public services organisations are most likely to have attended a COSHH Essentials seminar or workshop (17%), particularly those that work in education (25%).

Where respondents have attended a COSHH Essentials event, they were asked who the event was run by. A wide range of organisations are credited with running events covering COSHH Essentials, notably the HSE and British Safety Council. These organisations are listed in full in the data report.
USE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

PURPOSES OF USE

The qualitative research suggests that on receiving their copy of COSHH Essentials, most respondents skim read it and then filed it for further consultation as and when necessary, or passed it on to other appropriate staff members for their perusal.

“I skimmed through it to see if it was what we were expecting – it was. Then it was filed with a view to a more in-depth look later. That hasn’t happened yet but it has been used three or four times to look up dust controls. It has also been useful in explaining to supervisors and section managers why actions have been taken and systems put in place.”

In one case, after initially skim reading, the guide was then consulted heavily for a time.

“Skimmed through it at first – it is a big book. The question was, do we need this? I then got the senior supervisors involved and it was decided we had to undertake the review exercises, so the manual was used pretty much every day for a month or so, but since then we’ve probably only looked at it a couple of times.”

The great majority of respondents to the quantitative survey have looked at their copy of COSHH Essentials since receiving it (94%). There is no significant variance in this figure amongst sub-samples of respondents.

The following figure illustrates use of the COSHH Essentials guidance amongst those firms that have looked at it (multiple responses were permitted).

![Figure 8](image-url)

**Figure 8**

Use of COSHH Essentials (prompted, where have looked at COSHH Essentials)
Amongst those that have looked at the guidance (469 respondents), three-fifths have used it to see if they need new or different measures to control exposure to the chemical products they work with (60%; 56% of all respondents), whilst just over half have used it to see if they need to make changes to training (51%; 48% of all respondents). Just over one in four have used it for some other purpose (27%; 26% of all respondents). Overall, 79% of the sample have used COSHH Essentials for some purpose.

As a proportion of all firms in the sample, by size, micro-firms are most likely to have used the guidance (85% of those with up to ten employees). Firms with 100 employees or more are considerably less likely to have used the guidance (72%). Those that were very familiar with COSHH 1999 are more likely to have used COSHH Essentials (87%), as are those that were unfamiliar with the guidance (84%). Those that were only moderately familiar with the Regulations, however, are less likely to have used the guidance (72%).

**NON-USERS OF COSHH ESSENTIALS**

In total, 21% of the sample have not used COSHH Essentials since receiving it (103 respondents). The most common reason for this is that the firm already has COSHH assessments and controls in place (66%, equivalent to 14% of all respondents), suggesting that the guidance was purchased as a reference document. However, one in four of these firms have not done so due to having been too busy, or simply not getting round to it (24%, 5% of all), and one in six have found that COSHH Essentials is not relevant to their workplace (18%, 4% of all).

There is little variance in reasons for non-use of the guidance, although firms with up to ten employees at the site of interview are considerably less likely to say that they already have COSHH assessments and controls in place (41%).
THE COSHH ESSENTIALS ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Amongst those firms that have used COSHH Essentials (79% of the sample, 397 respondents), approaching three-fifths started by following the assessment system (56%, equivalent to 44% of all respondents), whilst just over a third went straight to the task-specific guidance sheets (34%). The remaining firms are unable to recall.

Only a minority of those firms that proceeded with the COSHH Essentials assessment system (221 respondents) experienced any problems whilst using the assessment system (8%; 3% of the sample as a whole). The smallest and largest firms are most likely to have experienced such problems (10% of those with up to ten employees, and 16% of those with between 200 and 249 staff). Traded services organisation are more likely to have faced problems while using the assessment system (11%), although this is not a significant difference.

Firms that experienced problems with the assessment system (only 17 respondents) are most likely to have run into trouble at step 4 of the process (selecting the appropriate task-specific control guidance sheet, 41%, 7 respondents). Step 2C (deciding how volatile liquids are) also appears to have caused many of these problems (35%, 6 respondents).

![Figure 10](image)

**Figure 10**
Stage of assessment at which respondent encountered problems (prompted, where have experienced problems)

The nature of the problems encountered is varied, but largely concerns the complexity of the information provided.

“*It is too detailed for first time users. Complexity could put people off, and cross referencing across chapters could create problems.*”

“*It was difficult to follow the chart provided without previous use.*”
“It gave us a pointer, but we found it a little difficult to use for a generic process. It was too specific to be of any use because we research, and we had to decide what we were doing first before we used it, so for us it was no use at all.”

Other firms detail more specific problems.

“Carbon Monoxide is not explained well enough. There are not enough details on the control and audit levels for this type of business.”

“Our hazard groups usually fall in general cleaning groups, but we have so many chemicals it is difficult and complicated to complete the COSHH assessment system.”

“It was difficult to quantify small, medium or large. It does not qualify what measurements are required or how much is needed when mixed with other substances.”

More than half of the firms that experienced problems with the assessment system did not ask for any help (53%, 9 respondents), although more than one in four sought help or advice from their chemicals supplier (29%, 5 respondents). Only one respondent sought help from their local HSE office or an occupational health specialist.

Overall, however, it is clear that those firms that have attempted to proceed through the assessment system (221 respondents) have found it reasonably straightforward. More than four-fifths of these respondents rate the assessment system as ‘fairly easy’ or ‘very easy’ (82%), and less than one in twenty rate it as ‘fairly difficult’.

![Bar chart showing the rating of the ease of using the assessment system overall.](image)

**Figure 11**

Rating of the ease of using the assessment system overall (where followed the assessment system)

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is equivalent to ‘very difficult’ and 5 is ‘very easy’, a mean rating of 3.96 is generated, equivalent to ‘fairly easy’. Similar ratings are achieved across different sub-samples of firms.
These findings are supported by the qualitative research, where the assessment system was felt generally to be easy, although likely to generate unnecessary paperwork if followed to the letter.

“The actual steps are a fairly standard approach and are very much in line with what we would do. The only thing is we modify it to cut down on the paperwork.”

**THE CONTROL GUIDANCE SHEETS**

The majority of firms that have used COSHH Essentials (397 respondents) were able to select the right control guidance sheet for their needs (89%), and this is in fact true across different sub-samples of firms. Whilst the difference is not significant, however, it is notable that smaller firms are slightly less likely to have been able to select the correct sheet (84% of those with up to ten employees at the site of interview).

Only a small minority of those firms that selected the correct guidance sheet can recall the exact guidance sheet that they used (5%, 16 respondents). Those that could not recall were asked the nature of the task that they used the sheet for. The table below illustrates the nature of tasks, including those respondents that were able to identify the sheet they used, and suggests that many firms are using the guidance as a reference tool, and to check that their existing measures are correct. Other important tasks include ventilation, storage, selection of PPE, dust extraction, and containment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of task (unprompted, where selected correct task specific guidance sheet)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General advice</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General principles</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General ventilation</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General storage</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of personal protective equipment</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust extraction</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General containment of substances</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixing substances</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of substances</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spray painting</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing substances</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sieving substances</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powder coating</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical assessment</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamination</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipping</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drying</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The great majority of firms that used the guidance (397 respondents) feel that the general control guidance and the task specific guidance sheets contained the information they needed (90%), although one in ten disagree (10%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, since COSHH Essentials is aimed at smaller firms, those with between 200 and 249 employees at that site are more likely to feel that the guidance did not contain the information they needed (19%), although this difference is not significant.

By sector, firms operating in services are more likely to feel that the information they required was not provided (13% of public services organisations, and 12% of traded services organisations), whilst those operating in production and construction are more likely to have found what they were looking for (92%), although once again, these differences are not significant.

Where additional information was required, firms are most likely to feel that they required more specialised or specific information.

“We are a specialised business and we would need specialised information.”

“We needed more specific information on pesticides and the prevention of exposure.”

“There needs to be a greater depth of information and it needs to be in more detail.”

“The information we received was adequate but it did not relate to smaller companies that have unsophisticated equipment. We required more simplified information corresponding with smaller quantities of chemicals.”

“Guidance on storage for paint sprays.”

“It could not cover all aspects of the type of business we carry out, and it did not cover any aspects of waste management.”

“We are a road tanker firm and the information was not specific enough for us.”

However, in contrast, some firms feel they require more general information.

“There needs to be more general guidance.”
One respondent felt that the guidance appeared to be targeted towards larger firms rather than small.

“COSHH is mainly focused on larger companies and users. The equipment shown in the manual would appear to fit in larger premises. Small factories cannot afford the capital outlay. Small manual companies need cheaper alternatives to be introduced.”

However, the great majority of firms found the format of the general control guidance clear and easy to follow (98%, equivalent to 78% of all respondents). Once again there is very little variance in this figure across the sample.

**ACTION TAKEN AS A RESULT OF USING COSHH ESSENTIALS**

More than three-quarters of the firms that have used COSHH Essentials since they received it (397 respondents) have taken some action as a result of using the guidance (76%). This equates to almost two-thirds of those that have actually looked at COSHH Essentials since receiving it (64%), and to three-fifths of the sample as a whole (60%). Overall, therefore, two-fifths of all respondent firms have taken no action as a result of purchasing COSHH Essentials (40%).

Interestingly, firms established at that site for a longer time appear to be more likely to have taken action as a result of the guidance than ‘younger’ establishments. Two-thirds of all firms aged 20 years or more (65%) have taken action, compared with less than three-fifths of recent start-ups, established for up to 5 years (56%).

However, by size, firms with up to ten employees (64%) or between 50 and 99 employees (64%) are most likely to have taken action as a result of purchasing COSHH Essentials, whilst larger firms are less likely to have done so (52% of those with 100 or more staff).

The most frequent action firms have taken is to check that existing control measures are working (67%). The qualitative interviews revealed that many companies using hazardous substances in their work already have systems in place to ensure safe handling practices, which are checked against the guidance. COSHH Essentials is through to provide a good standard approach.

“The systems we have in place are the ones approved in the United States. The COSHH guide has been used to review all of our chemical and engineering procedures to ensure compliance with UK legislation as well.”

Approaching half have provided training or information to workers (48%). The figure below illustrates the action taken amongst firms that have acted on COSHH Essentials (multiple responses were permitted).
While the most frequent courses of action are to have checked that existing control measures are working (67%) or to have provided training or information (48%), more than half have changed or improved the procedures or substances they use (56% have either changed their control measures, procedures or products, or improved their ventilation system).

Larger firms that have taken action are more likely to have taken more than one course of action (although larger firms on the whole, as discussed above, are less likely to have taken action in the first place). There are also variations by industry sector, as illustrated in the table below. The analysis suggests that firms operating in production and construction are more likely to have checked that their existing control measures are working, whilst those in public services (public administration, education and health – see appendix for full definition) are more likely than other firms to have provided training or information to workers.
Table 4
Action taken as a result of using COSHH Essentials, by industry sector (unprompted, where taken action)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry sector</th>
<th>Production &amp; Construction %</th>
<th>Traded Services %</th>
<th>Public Services %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checked that existing control measures are working</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed or improved procedures or substances</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided training or information to workers</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displayed the employee checklist in the workplace</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made sure that chemicals used are in full compliance with legislation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents that have not taken any action as a result of using COSHH Essentials are most likely to say that this is because they have decided that their existing measures are sufficient (73%), suggesting that they have at least checked their existing measures and found them satisfactory.
In fact, the HSE classifies checking that existing measures are sufficient as taking action. Two-thirds of those that say they have taken action have checked that existing control measures are working (67%, equivalent to 40% of all respondents), whilst three-quarters of those that have used COSHH Essentials but say they have not taken action say that this is because they have decided that their existing measures are sufficient (73%, equivalent to 14% of all respondents). This implies that overall, 54% of all respondent firms have used COSHH Essentials to check that existing control measures are sufficient, which increases the overall proportion of firms that can be said to have taken action as a result of purchasing COSHH Essentials to 74%.

The reasons given for taking no action as a result of using COSHH Essentials reflect those given earlier in the survey by firms that have not used the guidance. An analysis of both sets of findings suggests that just over one in twenty firms that purchase the guidance find that the pack is not relevant to their work (7%), whilst a small minority use it for reference only (3%), or find the pack too complex (1%).
EVALUATION OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

OUTCOME OF USING COSHH ESSENTIALS

In order to evaluate the impact of COSHH Essentials, those respondents that have used the guidance (397 respondents) were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each of a series of statements about the guidance. The statements measured in this way were as follows:

- After using COSHH Essentials, I know how to do a risk assessment for chemical health risks.
- I have confidence in my risk assessments for chemical health risks.
- I am confident that I know how to control chemical health risks in my workplace.
- I need more help to control chemical health risks in my workplace.
- COSHH Essentials has helped me train people in my workplace.

Ratings were given on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘disagree strongly’, and 5 is ‘agree strongly’. The figure below illustrates the proportion of respondents that agree and disagree with the specified statements.

Figure 14
Agreement with specified statements (where used COSHH Essentials)
As the figure illustrates, the majority of respondents that have used COSHH Essentials agree that as a result, they know how to do a risk assessment for chemical health risks, they are confident in their risk assessments, and that they know how to control chemical health risks in the workplace. Fewer, approximately half, feel that COSHH Essentials has helped them to train people in the workplace, although this may reflect the fact that most respondents have direct responsibility for health and safety rather than training in their workplace.

Encouragingly, only a minority feel that they need more help to control chemical risks in their workplace after having used COSHH Essentials (12%), although this rises amongst firms with 200 or more employees (15%, not a significant increase).

RECOMMENDATION OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

Whether a firm would recommend a product is often a good indicator of their appraisal of the product. The great majority of all respondents say that they would recommend COSHH Essentials to other businesses (94%). This is a higher proportion than have actually used the guidance, and suggests that even those firms that found the guidance irrelevant to their own needs recognise its benefits.

This finding was echoed in qualitative interviews where even firms that had taken no action as a result of purchasing the guidance were happy to endorse it.

“We have taken no significant action but I would recommend the guide if only as a way to improve the manner of achieving the approach to handling hazardous material. It is another way of looking at what in many cases is already being done.”

“If relevant to them it is valuable even if only for the first section. The worked examples are the best parts and it is easy to use.”

A number of respondents that would not recommend the guidance publication say that this is because they themselves have not yet looked through the guidance, and so cannot offer an informed evaluation. Others feel that the guidance is insufficiently specific.

“COSHH should publish guidelines that focus on different professions and industries, the areas are too vague.”

“It contains no information that has not been published in previous publications, or is not freely available.”

“I would not recommend it to people in the same business as us, as there are better publications available. It needs to be biologically based rather than chemical based.”

“We do not manufacture, it is not relevant to us.”
DEVELOPMENT OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

COMPUTERISED TRAINING PACKAGE

Approximately half of the sample say they would be interested in using a computerised COSHH Essentials training package, on disk or CD ROM (51%). This relatively lukewarm reception may reflect the fact that very few respondents experienced any problems using the system, were unable to select the correct sheet, or feel that the system was not easy to use.

Traded services (58%) and public services organisations (55%) are more likely than firms operating in production and construction (46%) to be interested in using such a package. Respondents that were initially unfamiliar with COSHH (56%), and those that were very familiar with the regulations (54%) are more likely than those that feel they were moderately familiar with the legislation (49%) to express interest in an electronic training package, although these differences are not of significant magnitude.

INTERNET VERSIONS OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

The great majority of firms in the sample have Internet access at the site of interview (92%). Younger firms (86% of those established for up to 2 years) and smaller firms are slightly less likely to have Internet access (85% of those with up to ten employees), whilst all of those with 200 employees or more are online at the site of interview.

Amongst the minority of firms without Internet access (40 respondents), approximately one in three are planning to have Internet access at that site in the future (35%; 3% of all respondents). In total, therefore, it is likely that up to 95% of firms purchasing COSHH Essentials will have access to the Internet.

Firms that have Internet access, or who are planning to have Internet access in the future (474 respondents), were asked whether they would be interested in using an intelligent, interactive Internet version of COSHH Essentials on an HSE web-site that could help them to choose the correct control measures. Two-thirds of these firms express interest (67%; equivalent to 63% of all respondents), suggesting that there is a solid foundation of support for the development of such a product.

Interest in an interactive Internet version of COSHH Essentials as described above varies by industry sector. Traded services (73%) and public services organisations (72%) express a higher degree of interest than do those operating in production and construction (60%), although it should be noted that there is a balance of support for such a product across industry sectors.

As one might expect, respondents that have used COSHH Essentials since purchase are more likely to express interest in an Internet version (69%), although almost three-fifths of firms that have not used the guidance (and who have, or plan to have, Internet access) would be interested in an online version (58%).

24
Firms that have, or plan to have Internet access (474 respondents) were also asked whether they would be interested in an Internet version of COSHH Essentials that included environmental and chemical safety advice as well as health matters. There is an even higher level of support for such an ‘extended’ online version of COSHH Essentials. Approaching three-quarters of firms that have or plan to have Internet access express interest in such a product (72%, equivalent to 68% of all respondents). Smaller companies display generally higher levels of interest, particularly those with between 11 and 49 employees (76%), whilst larger firms, with between 200 and 249 employees, are least likely to be interested in such a version of the guidance (63%).

Once again, firms in traded services (77%) and public services organisations (75%) are more likely to express interest than those in production and construction (68%), although these differences are not significant. Three-quarters of respondents that have used the guidance (75%), compared with three-fifths of those that have not (60%) express interest in an Internet version of COSHH Essentials covering the additional areas detailed. Furthermore, firms that were initially more familiar with the COSHH Regulations 1999 are more likely to be interested in such a development (74% of those that were very familiar, compared with 69% of those that were not familiar with the Regulations).

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The qualitative research indicates that COSHH Essentials is generally regarded as a useful document, particularly by those companies involved in activities associated with traditional manufacturing processes. However, in some cases the guidance is considered to be lacking in appropriate detail or technical content.

Findings from the qualitative interviews also indicate that some organisations, particularly those not engaged in manufacturing processes, sometimes question the relevance to themselves of the regulations and guidance on the grounds that they use only minimal quantities of the substances concerned. Some establishments also tend to find the guide complex in that different levels of people have differing levels of access and supervision when handling hazardous materials. This complexity is said to make it a very time consuming activity to go through the guide and provide designated approaches for each eventuality, particularly where the substances involved are many but the quantities of each are small.

“It is fine as an approach where there is a single level of access and of risk, but these are variable and to have to utilise the whole approach from start to finish for each particular case is not practical.”

“There is some difficulty in associating the small amounts of materials with the requirements of COSHH, particularly where the workplace risks are minimal anyway.”

However, participants in the qualitative research praised the guidance’s use of relatively clear English and layman’s terms.

“Layman’s terms, not clothed in jargon, the text is about right I would say.”

“The language implies a degree of technical knowledge needed and some intellectual capability so does not underestimate the user. Pitched exactly right.”

Respondents to both the qualitative interviews and the quantitative survey were invited to make suggestions for ways in which COSHH Essentials could be improved. Many feel that the pack is insufficiently specific or specialised for their needs.
“It is too vague, but good for first time users as a starting point.”

“It is too basic and could be more in-depth in the information provided.”

“It is too vague about plastics, it needs to cover all aspects of plastic processing. There are too many industries in one package.”

“It should cover dust and mainline safety for the timber industry.”

“It needs to be more specific on pesticides used in farms and nurseries.”

“Petro-chemicals would be good but their non-inclusion is understood as it is a very specialised field.”

“It is not advanced enough for chemical companies who have acquired more advanced information previously.”

“We were struggling for information on disposal, and also small quantities. We need more relevant information.”

“The guide needs to start to get away from its traditional industrial basis and move towards covering modern hi-tech electronics and microbiological fields.”

However, in contrast, a number of respondents feel that a simplified version of COSHH Essentials would be useful.

“It could be more structured and a little more simplified.”

“They need to simplify the explanation of health risks to employees so it is easy for them to understand.”

“Maybe simpler terminology for those less aware of health and safety.”

“It is aimed at industry chemical use so lower risk environmental chemical use could use a simplified version.”

“It needs to be simplified and computerised so contractors can access the advice easily.”

“I would like to see a basic guide on chemical waste management. People get put off by the complexity of existing guidance.”

“We were very impressed from an industrial health and safety perspective. However, there could be a small or light users version, perhaps.”

“Maybe an office version with cleaning and maintenance rather than the whole ball park.”

“They should introduce a domestic, general version of COSHH Essentials for offices, schools and household use.”

Perhaps reflecting the perceived complexity and or lack of specificity of COSHH Essentials, a number of respondents commented that the pack appears to be targeted at larger firms rather than small units.

“They need to target small and medium sized businesses.”
“They should focus on businesses on a smaller scale rather than a larger production manufacturing one.”

Several respondents mentioned that they would like to receive updates on the guidance, and others voiced their support for an electronic version of the guidance.

“To receive regular updates on COSHH Essentials that could be updated on new and advanced systems, applications and methods.”

“There should be mailshots for any updates on the sheets.”

“If it is not updated there is a danger of people thinking, are we the only ones using the guide? It is likely to lose credibility.”

“I feel that an electronic system could split advice into basic, normal and advanced, depending on size and type of user.”

“I use a laptop when visiting clients so an electronic version of COSHH Essentials would be handy, as the manual is too bulky to carry around.”

“I would like to see COSHH on a CD ROM or online help. A simple account, based in the workplace, on the way chemicals affect people.”

“There should be more information on electronic material, and CD ROMs would be more suitable for our company.”

“I would like to see more computer interactive systems.”

Many suggestions were made for further information respondents would like to see included in COSHH Essentials.

“Maybe a source of information on specific high risk chemicals for further control measures.”

“More help would be useful to deal with everyday chemicals, not necessarily COSHH chemicals, but chemicals such as Dettox.”

“I would like to see operator usage, environmental issues, disposal and safer alternatives all covered in COSHH Essentials.”

“Environmental coverage would be useful.”

“It should include more lower risk information for smaller businesses.”

“COSHH Essentials should cover health surveillance issues.”

“There should be some guidance for transport of chemicals.”

“There needs to be more information on chemicals and substances and much wider industry-based information, such as welding and transport.”

“There should be more chemistry related information and a stronger emphasis on training and dissemination of information. There needs to be more information, with pull-out training aids and posters.”

“I would like more information on boiling points and operating temperatures.”
“It needs to be more environmentally focussed and there should be a risk assessment for animals, ensuring pesticide safety for example.”

“They should cover construction based activities such as cement, oils and paints.”

“There should be some more real world assessments, one from each industry.”

“We would like advice on the disposal of chemicals.”

**OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENIST VISIT**

In order to fully investigate the way in which COSHH Essentials is used in the workplace, the Health and Safety Executive wishes to arrange visits by an occupational hygienist to selected firms using the guidance. At the end of the survey, participants were asked whether they would like to receive such a visit. It was explained that the visitors would give fee advice to firms, and that any information gathered during the visit would be anonymous and not made available to HSE inspectors.

More than one in three firms that took part in the survey are interested in receiving a visit from an occupational hygienist (35%). As one might expect, those that have used the guidance are more likely to express interest in such a visit (39%), although more than one in five of those that have not used the guidance are also interested (22%).

Firms that express interest in receiving a visit from an occupational hygienist are less likely than average to be micro-firms, with up to ten employees (17%, compared with a sample average of 22%). They are considerably more likely to be engaged in manufacturing (56%, compared with a sample average of 45%).

Although they are no more likely to have looked at COSHH Essentials since they received it (94%, identical to the sample average), they are more likely to have used the guidance (87% of these firms, compared with a sample average of 79%). Interestingly, interested firms that have used the COSHH Essentials assessment system are more likely to have experienced problems in using it (11%, compared with a sample average of 8%). Those that have used the guidance are more likely to have taken action as a result (81% of interested firms, compared with a sample average of 76%).
APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATIONS

PRODUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION –
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES (FARMING, FISHING, UTILITIES), MANUFACTURING, AND CONSTRUCTION

TRADED SERVICES –
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL, REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES, HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS, TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS, FINANCIAL INTERMEDIATION (E.G. ACCOUNTANCY, LIFE ASSURANCE), REAL ESTATE, RENTING AND OTHER BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

PUBLIC SERVICES –
HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK, EDUCATION, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE, OTHER COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES, PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS WITH EMPLOYED PERSONS
APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE EMPLOYED
INTRODUCTION
Ask to speak to the named contact, or the person with dedicated responsibility for health and safety at that site. Good morning/afternoon, my name is .......... from BMG Research. We are carrying out research amongst businesses that have bought a copy of the COSHH Essentials Guidance Manual from the Health and Safety Executive to evaluate how well the guidance is helping the companies that have bought it. Can I just confirm that your organisation has received a copy of the COSHH Essentials Manual?

1 YES – CONTINUE
2 NO – CHECK YOU ARE SPEAKING TO CORRECT CONTACT. IF CORRECT CONTACT HAS NO RECOLLECTION OF RECEIVING COSHH ESSENTIALS, THANK AND CLOSE

READ: The Health and Safety Executive will use the findings of the survey to develop and improve the guidance they provide. Could I take some of your time to ask you some questions? Any information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. The interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTACT REF NO.</th>
<th>DATABASE SIC</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DATABASE SIZE</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESPONDENT NAME</td>
<td>CHECK SPELLING</td>
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<tr>
<td>TELEPHONE NUMBER</td>
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<td>POSTCODE ESSENTIAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMAIL ADDRESS</td>
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</table>
ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

1. What is your job title? **DO NOT PROMPT. WRITE IN AND CODE BELOW**

   ________________________________________________________________
   1 OWNER / MANAGING DIRECTOR / HEAD OF BUSINESS
   2 SAFETY MANAGER
   3 OTHER MANAGER / FOREMAN
   4 OTHER EMPLOYEE WITH HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITY
   5 HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSULTANT
   6 OTHER CONSULTANT
   7 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINER
   8 OTHER **SPECIFIED ABOVE**

2. What is the main business activity at this site?

   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   OFFICE CODE (SIC 1992 2 DIGIT) ________________

3. Including yourself, what is the total number of employees at that site? Please include all part time staff, all working directors, managers, people based there who work away, and any temporary or casual staff. **IF UNSURE OBTAIN AN APPROXIMATION AND CODE BELOW**

   TOTAL ________________

   1 1-10 EMPLOYEES
   2 11-49 EMPLOYEES
   3 50-99 EMPLOYEES
   4 100-199 EMPLOYEES
   5 200-249 EMPLOYEES
   6 250+ EMPLOYEES – **THANK AND CLOSE**
   7 DON’T KNOW
4. Which of the following best describes the status of your business at this site?

READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

1. A SINGLE SITE ORGANISATION WITH NO OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS – GO TO Q6
2. A BRANCH OR SUBSIDIARY OR DIVISION WITH HEADQUARTERS ELSEWHERE IN GREAT BRITAIN
3. A BRANCH OR SUBSIDIARY OR DIVISION WITH HEADQUARTERS OUTSIDE GREAT BRITAIN
4. A HEADQUARTERS, REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS WITH BRANCHES ELSEWHERE
95. OTHER PLEASE SPECIFY ________________________

WHERE HAVE HEADQUARTERS / BRANCHES ELSEWHERE:
5. How many sites does your firm have in total? WRITE IN BELOW

_________________________ SITES

ASK ALL:
6. For how many years has your company been trading at this site? WRITE IN BELOW. IF UNSURE, OBTAIN AN APPROXIMATION AND CODE ONE ONLY

_________________________ YEARS

1. LESS THAN A YEAR
2. 1 TO <2 YEARS
3. 2 TO <5 YEARS
4. 5 TO <10 YEARS
5. 11 TO <20 YEARS
6. 20 YEARS +
7. DON’T KNOW

PURCHASE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

ASK ALL:
7. Are you the end user for whom COSHH Essentials was purchased?

1. YES – CONTINUE WITH INTERVIEW
2. NO – ASK TO SPEAK TO THE END USER. IF NECESSARY, MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK AND WRITE IN TIME BELOW

APPOINTMENT TIME: ______________________
8. How did you find out about COSHH Essentials? **READ OUT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

1. ADVERTS
2. SUPPLIER OF CHEMICAL PRODUCTS E.G. PAINTS, HAIR SPRAY
3. HSE LEAFLETS / LITERATURE
4. HSE TELEPHONE INFORMATION SERVICE
6. FROM A CONSULTANT
7. FROM A BUSINESS CONTACT
8. FROM A COLLEAGUE
9. RESPONSIBLE CARE CELL
10. FROM A TRAINING PROVIDER
11. FROM A TRADE ASSOCIATION
12. FROM A TRADE UNION
13. OTHER **PLEASE SPECIFY**

9. Did you attend a seminar or workshop on COSHH Essentials?

1. YES
2. NO – **GO TO Q11**

WHERE YES:

10. Who ran the seminar? **WRITE IN BELOW**

USE OF COSHH ESSENTIALS

11. After you obtained a copy of COSHH Essentials, did you look at it?

1. YES – **CONTINUE**
2. NO – **GO TO Q13**
WHERE YES:
12. Have you used COSHH Essentials? **READ OUT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

1 TO SEE IF YOU NEED NEW OR DIFFERENT MEASURES TO CONTROL EXPOSURE TO THE CHEMICAL PRODUCTS YOU WORK WITH – **GO TO Q14**
2 TO SEE IF YOU NEED TO MAKE CHANGES TO TRAINING – **GO TO Q14**
3 OTHER **PLEASE SPECIFY** __________________________

_________________________________________________ – **GO TO Q14**
4 INTEND TO USE COSHH ESSENTIALS BUT HAVE NOT DONE SO YET – **CONTINUE**
5 NO, HAVE NOT USED COSHH ESSENTIALS – **CONTINUE**

WHERE HAVE NOT LOOKED AT / USED COSHH ESSENTIALS:
13. What are your reasons for not using COSHH Essentials? **PROBE FULLY, BUT DO NOT PROMPT, CODE ALL THAT APPLY BELOW**

1 COSHH ESSENTIALS IS NOT RELEVANT TO THIS WORKPLACE
2 NO NEED – NO-ONE IN THE WORKPLACE SUFFERS ILL HEALTH FROM THE CHEMICALS USED
3 HAVE BEEN TOO BUSY / NOT GOT ROUND TO IT
4 ALREADY HAVE COSHH ASSESSMENTS AND CONTROLS IN PLACE
5 THE DOCUMENTATION WAS TOO COMPLICATED
6 EMPLOYER / MANAGER IS NOT INTERESTED IN USING IT
95 OTHER **PLEASE SPECIFY** __________________________

_________________________________________________ __________________________
96 NO PARTICULAR REASON
97 DON’T KNOW

NOW **GO TO Q29**

WHERE HAVE USED COSHH ESSENTIALS:
14. When you started to use COSHH Essentials, did you start by following the assessment system, or did you go straight to the task-specific guidance sheets package? **READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY**

1 STARTED BY FOLLOWING THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
2 WENT STRAIGHT TO THE TASK-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE SHEETS PACKAGE – **GO TO Q20**
3 CAN’T RECALL – **GO TO Q20**
WHERE FOLLOWED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM:
15. Did you have any problems using the COSHH Essentials assessment system?

1 YES – CONTINUE
2 NO – GO TO Q19

WHERE YES:
16. At what stage of the assessment system did you encounter problems? READ OUT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1 STEP 2A – DECIDING WHICH HAZARD GROUP THE MATERIAL BELONGED TO
2 STEP 2B – DECIDING HOW MUCH IS USED
3 STEP 2C – DECIDING HOW DUSTY SOLIDS ARE
4 STEP 2C – DECIDING HOW VOLATILE LIQUIDS ARE
5 STEP 3 – FINDING THE CONTROL APPROACH AND GUIDANCE SHEET
6 STEP 4 – SELECTING THE APPROPRIATE TASK-SPECIFIC CONTROL GUIDANCE SHEET
7 STEP 5 – PLANNING HOW TO PUT THE ADVICE IN THE CONTROL SHEET INTO ACTION
8 OTHER PLEASE SPECIFY __________________________

17. What problems did you encounter? PROBE FULLY AND WRITE IN VERBATIM BELOW


18. When you had problems following the risk assessment scheme, did you ask any of the following for help? READ OUT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1 LOCAL HSE INSPECTOR / OFFICE
2 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SPECIALIST
3 CHEMICALS SUPPLIER
4 TRAINING PROVIDER
5 TRADE ASSOCIATION
6 TRADE UNION
7 OTHER PLEASE SPECIFY __________________________
8 DID NOT ASK FOR HELP
19. Could you please give me a rating of how easy you found the assessment system to use overall? READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY

5 VERY EASY
4 FAIRLY EASY
3 NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT
2 FAIRLY DIFFICULT
1 VERY DIFFICULT
6 DON’T KNOW

20. Were you able to select the right control guidance sheet for your needs?

1 YES – CONTINUE
2 NO – GO TO Q22

WHERE YES:
21. Which was the main task specific guidance sheet you used? WRITE IN 3 DIGIT NUMBER AND TITLE – CHECK AGAINST INFORMATION SHEET

NUMBER _______ TITLE ___________________________________________

997 CAN’T RECALL – WRITE BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF TASK BELOW AND CODE ON CODE FRAME

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

1 GENERAL VENTILATION
2 GENERAL STORAGE
3 DUST EXTRACTION
4 TRANSFER OF SUBSTANCES
5 WEIGHING SUBSTANCES
6 MIXING SUBSTANCES
7 SIEVING SUBSTANCES
8 SCREENING
9 SPRAY PAINTING
10 POWDER COATING
11 LAMINATION
12 DIPPING
13 DRYING
14 PELLETISING
15 GENERAL CONTAINMENT OF SUBSTANCES
16 GENERAL PRINCIPLES
17 GENERAL ADVICE
18 SELECTION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT
95 OTHER SPECIFIED ABOVE
22. Did the general control guidance and the task specific guidance sheets contain the information you needed?

1 YES – GO TO Q24
2 NO – CONTINUE

WHERE NO:
23. What additional information did you need? WRITE IN VERBATIM BELOW

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

24. Was the format of the general control guidance and the task specific guidance sheets clear and easy to follow?

1 YES
2 NO

25. Have you taken any action as a result of using the pack?

1 YES – CONTINUE
2 NO – GO TO Q27

WHERE YES:
26. What action have you taken? DO NOT PROMPT, WRITE IN AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY BELOW

1 CHECKED IF EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES ARE WORKING
2 CHANGED THE CONTROL MEASURES USED
3 PROVIDED TRAINING OR INFORMATION TO WORKERS
4 DISPLAYED THE EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST IN THE WORKPLACE
5 CHANGED OTHER PROCEDURES GIVEN IN THE CONTROL GUIDANCE SHEETS (E.G. HOUSEKEEPING / STORAGE ARRANGEMENTS)
6 CHANGED THE PRODUCT BEING USED FOR ONE LESS HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH
7 OTHER SPECIFIED ABOVE

NOW GO TO Q28

38
WHERE NOT TAKEN ACTION:
27. Why have you not taken any action? **DO NOT PROMPT, WRITE IN AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY BELOW**

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
1 DECIDED EXISTING MEASURES ARE SUFFICIENT
2 FOUND PACK TOO COMPLEX
3 COULD NOT DECIDE WHAT TO DO
4 OTHER SPECIFIED ABOVE

28. After using COSHH Essentials, to what extent do you agree that the following statements are true? Please give your answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is disagree strongly, and 5 is agree strongly. **READ OUT STATEMENT AND CODE RATING FOR EACH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>DISAGREE STRONGLY</th>
<th>AGREE STRONGLY</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I KNOW HOW TO DO A RISK ASSESSMENT FOR CHEMICAL HEALTH RISKS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN MY RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR CHEMICAL HEALTH RISKS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I AM CONFIDENT THAT I KNOW HOW TO CONTROL CHEMICAL HEALTH RISKS IN MY WORKPLACE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I NEED MORE HELP TO CONTROL CHEMICAL HEALTH RISKS IN MY WORKPLACE</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSHH ESSENTIALS HAS HELPED ME TRAIN PEOPLE IN MY WORKPLACE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EVALUATION OF COSHH ESSENTIALS
ASK ALL:
29. How familiar were you with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (1999) (COSHH Regulations) before findings out about COSHH Essentials? **READ OUT AND CODE ONE ONLY**

1 VERY FAMILIAR
2 MODERATELY FAMILIAR
3 UNFAMILIAR (NO / VERY LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF COSHH)
30. Would you recommend COSHH Essentials to other businesses?

1  YES – GO TO Q33
2  NO – CONTINUE

WHERE NO:
31. Why do you say that? WRITE IN VERBATIM BELOW

DEVELOPMENT OF COSHH ESSENTIALS
ASK ALL:
32. Would you be interested in using a computerised COSHH Essentials training package, on disk or CD ROM?

1  YES
2  NO
3  DON’T KNOW

33. Does your company have internet access at that site?

1  YES – GO TO Q35
2  NO – CONTINUE

WHERE NO:
34. Are you planning to have internet access at that site in the future?

1  YES – CONTINUE
2  NO – GO TO Q37
3  DON’T KNOW – GO TO Q37

WHERE YES:
35. Would you be interested in using an intelligent, interactive internet version of COSHH Essentials on an HSE website that could help you choose the correct control measures, for example deciding how volatile any liquids are?

1  YES
2  NO
3  DON’T KNOW
36. COSHH Essentials currently only covers risks to worker health. Would you be interested in an internet version of COSHH Essentials that included environmental and chemical safety advice as well as health matters, for example on disposing of chemicals and using flammable chemicals?

1 YES
2 NO
3 DON’T KNOW

ASK ALL:
37. Do you have any other suggestions for ways in which COSHH Essentials could be improved? PROBE: Are there any other areas you would like to see covered? WRITE IN VERBATIM BELOW

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
  ________________________________________________________________
  ________________________________________________________________
  ________________________________________________________________

38. Finally, in order to fully investigate the way in which COSHH Essentials is used in the workplace, the Health and Safety Executive would like to arrange visits by an occupational hygienist to selected firms using the guidance. The visitors would give free advice to firms, and any information gathered during the visit would be anonymous and not made available to HSE inspectors. Would you be interested in receiving such a visit?

1 YES – READ: Your company name and address details will be passed on to the HSE, who may contact you regarding a visit. Your responses to other questions in the survey will not be passed on in connection with your name.
2 NO

READ: If you require more information on Health and Safety, I can give you the number of HSE InfoLine. IF REQUIRED: HSE InfoLine: 0870 545500

THANK AND CLOSE
**APPENDIX 3: SAMPLING ERRORS**

Table 5
Percentage sampling errors on a single sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE SIZE (n)</th>
<th>95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL</th>
<th>99% CONFIDENCE LEVEL</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/90%</td>
<td>25/75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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Table 6
Comparison of two matched samples or sub-samples at the 95% confidence level

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