

SR26

COSHH Essentials for
service and retail

Working with flowers, fruit and vegetables

Control approach 1 General ventilation / personal
protective equipment (PPE)

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) require employers to ensure that exposure is prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled. This guidance gives practical advice on how this can be achieved by applying the principles of good practice for the control of exposure to substances hazardous to health, as required by COSHH.

It is aimed at people whose responsibilities include the management of substances hazardous to health at work (eg occupational health specialists, anyone undertaking COSHH assessments, and supervisors). It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives. It will help you carry out COSHH assessments, review existing assessments, deliver training, and supervise activities involving substances hazardous to health.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, 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.

See Essential information near the end of the sheet.

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good control practice for florists, greengrocers, chefs, bar staff and garden centre staff when carrying out wet work or working with plant sap and oils, some of which can be hazardous to health.

It covers the key points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level. This is achieved by following good control practice, ie follow all the points described in this sheet or use equally effective measures.

Hazards

- ✓ Contact with many flowers, fruits and vegetables or prolonged contact with water (wet work), plant sap and oils can lead to dermatitis.
- ✓ Some flowers, fruits and vegetables can cause skin allergies.

Equipment and procedures

- ✓ Provide a good standard of general ventilation. This can be natural ventilation from doors, windows etc. or controlled, where air is supplied and/or removed by powered fans.
- ✓ Keep plant sap and oils off your skin – wash hands immediately if this occurs.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ RPE is not normally needed.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Provide and ensure that workers use suitable protective gloves.

Personal decontamination and skin care

- ✓ Provide warm water, mild skin cleansers, and soft paper or fabric towels for drying. Avoid abrasive cleansers.
- ✓ Provide pre-work skin creams, which will make it easier to wash contaminants from the skin.
- ✓ Provide after-work creams to replenish skin oils.

Caution: These creams are not a substitute for gloves and do not provide a full barrier.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Clean work equipment and the work area daily. Clean other equipment and the workroom regularly – at least once a week but note that any food contact area should be cleaned and disinfected daily.

Health surveillance

- ✓ Provide health surveillance for dermatitis where there is a reasonable likelihood that this may occur in your workplace. See sheet G403 in Essential information.

Training and supervision

- ✓ Provide supervision – ensure that safe work procedures are followed.
- ✓ Tell workers about the hazards associated with their work and how to recognise early signs of dermatitis.
- ✓ Involve managers and supervisors in health and safety training.

Essential information

S100 – General advice on chemicals causing harm via skin or eye contact

S101 – Selecting protective gloves

S102 – Selecting personal protective equipment

G403 – Health surveillance for occupational dermatitis

Further information

Skin at work web pages: www.hse.gov.uk/skin

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

You can find the full COSHH Essentials series at www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm

For information about health and safety, visit <https://books.hse.gov.uk> or <http://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.

To report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, email: commissioning@tso.co.uk

Employee checklist

- Use, maintain and store your PPE in accordance with instructions.
- Wash hands before eating and drinking, after smoking and using the lavatory, and after work.
- Check your skin regularly for dryness or soreness.
- Make sure you know the procedure on reporting if such symptoms occur. Early intervention means it will be less likely that you develop permanent symptoms.
- Use skin creams provided as instructed.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.