

SR8b

COSHH Essentials for
service and retail

Eradicating vermin using gases

Control approach 1 Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) / general ventilation

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 practice for the control of exposure to rodenticides in gases used to eradicate vermin.

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.

This sheet does not apply to space fumigation (eg warehouses, containers).

Hazards

- ✓ Rodenticides etc. are very poisonous products that can cause serious ill health if breathed in, swallowed, or in contact with the skin. For example, gassing with phosphine gas then inhaling phosphine can cause respiratory irritation, compromise heart (cardiac) and circulatory functions, depress the central nervous system, and produce severe gastrointestinal pain. Rodenticides may also be flammable.
- ✓ If gassing with powders that generate phosphine, refer to specific regulations on indoor uses (see regulation 14.2 in *Control of substances hazardous to health* L5 in Further information).
- ✓ Contact with rat urine can lead to Leptospirosis (Weil's disease). Cover cuts and broken skin.

Access to work area

- ✓ Keep people and pets away while applying rodenticides etc. and when retrieving bait or dead animals.
- ✓ If treating by powder blowing, you may need help in blocking burrows.
- ✓ Display warning signs.

Equipment and procedures

- ✓ Ensure the equipment provided for applying product works properly, without leaks.
- ✓ Dispose of the rodenticide container safely and follow local authority waste management guidance or return it to your supplier.
- ✓ Contractors using professional pesticides should have a British Pest Control Association (BPCA) qualification.
- ✓ Store products safely in a cool, dry, ventilated, dark place, in a way capable of retaining any spills. Only store the amount you need.
- ✓ Read instructions on labels carefully – follow the instructions for use provided on the Safety Data Sheet (SDS).
- ✓ Clear up spills immediately. Absorb liquids in granules. Scoop solids or absorbed liquids into a marked secure container.
- ✓ Keep chemicals off your skin – wash off any splashes immediately.

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- ✓ Put caps back on containers immediately after use and wipe the outside clean.
 - ✓ Make a plan for the treatment – don't over-gas.
 - ✓ Rodenticide products should ONLY be used in well ventilated areas, to prevent the build-up of harmful vapour. Examples of poorly ventilated areas can include cellars, stairwells and sheeted enclosures.
 - ✓ Don't carry out gassing treatments within 10 metres of dwellings.
 - ✓ Double bag the remains of dead vermin into marked polythene bags and seal for disposal by burning if possible or to landfill as with standard waste.
 - ✓ Consider what information you need to give to clients.
 - ✓ **Caution: Before carrying out any work in a confined space refer to the specific guidance in HSE publication L101 *Safe work in confined spaces*.**

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ You need respiratory protective equipment (RPE) when using rodenticides in gases.
- ✓ As a minimum, provide tight-fitting RPE with a filter cartridge capable of protecting against the rodenticide. See the chemical supplier's SDS and sheet R3 in Essential information.
- ✓ Fit testing is required for RPE with a tight-fitting face seal (see INDG479 in Further information).
- ✓ Workers wearing tight-fitting RPE must be clean shaven.
- ✓ Ensure RPE is compatible with other PPE worn.
- ✓ Workers should be trained how to check RPE is working properly before every use, how to record this, how to fit it properly and how to look after it.
- ✓ Change the filters on respirators in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations and if:
 - the shelf-life expiry date has passed;
 - they are damaged or visibly contaminated;
 - they become harder to breathe through;
 - they have reached their break-through time for vapours or gases.
- ✓ For reusable RPE, a thorough maintenance, examination and test should be carried out at least once a month and recorded. However, if the RPE is used only occasionally, an examination and test should be carried out before use and, in any event, the interval should not exceed three months.
- ✓ Keep RPE clean and store it in a clean place.
- ✓ If RPE is required for extended periods, eg longer than one hour, use powered respirators or constant flow airline breathing apparatus.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Provide and ensure that workers use protective gloves. Single-use nitrile gloves are acceptable.
- ✓ If single-use gloves are selected then dispose of them safely every time you take them off.
- ✓ Provide waterproof, slip-resistant boots and protective goggles.

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- ✓ You may need to provide a waterproof suit with head and face protection.
 - ✓ Consult workers to ensure PPE will be suitable for them.
 - ✓ Ensure that all items of PPE are compatible.
 - ✓ Make suitable arrangements for maintenance, storage and replacement of PPE.
 - ✓ Workers must not take work clothing home for washing. Use a contract laundry.

Personal decontamination and skin care

- ✓ Keep chemicals off your skin – wash off any splashes immediately.
- ✓ Provide warm water, mild skin cleansers, and soft paper or fabric towels for drying. Avoid abrasive cleansers.
- ✓ Provide pre-work skin creams, which make it easier to wash contaminants from the skin.
- ✓ Moisturisers should then be used after hand washing.
- ✓ Provide after-work creams to replenish skin oils.
- ✓ **Caution: These creams are not a substitute for gloves and do not provide a full barrier.**

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Keep all equipment used for the task in effective working order. Maintain it as advised by the supplier or installer.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Clean work equipment and the work area after use. Clean other equipment and the work area regularly – once a week is recommended.
- ✓ Deal with spills immediately – absorb liquid spills with granules and decontaminate the area (ask your product supplier or follow the Safety Data Sheet instructions).
- ✓ Dispose of hazardous waste and dead vermin safely and follow local authority waste management guidance.

Health surveillance

- ✓ Employers are required to carry out health surveillance if workers use a product labelled ‘May cause sensitisation by skin contact’ or ‘May cause sensitisation by inhalation’, and in such cases should consult an occupational health professional.
- ✓ Provide health surveillance for asthma where there is a reasonable likelihood that this may occur in your workplace. See sheet G402 in Essential information for further details.
- ✓ Provide health surveillance for dermatitis where there is a reasonable likelihood that this may occur in your workplace. See sheet G403 in Essential information for further details.
- ✓ Consult an occupational health professional on the level of health surveillance required.

Training and supervision

- ✓ Inform workers that the hazards can cause dermatitis and asthma.
- ✓ Tell them what the early signs of dermatitis and asthma are.
- ✓ Provide supervision – ensure that safe work procedures are followed.

- ✓ Train workers to clear up spills and dead vermin safely.
- ✓ Involve managers and supervisors in health and safety training.
- ✓ Carry with you the Leptospirosis information card titled ‘Leptospirosis: are you at risk?’

Essential information

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

S102 – Selecting personal protective equipment

G402 – Health surveillance for occupational asthma

G403 – Health surveillance for occupational dermatitis

INDG84 - Leptospirosis: are you at risk?

L101 – Safe work in confined spaces

R3 – UK Standard Assigned Protection Factor 20 (APF 20)

Further information

Posters on protective gloves and skin care
www.hse.gov.uk/skin/information.htm

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

Control of substances hazardous to health: The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L5 (sixth edition) HSE 2013.
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l5.htm>

Managing skin exposure risks at work HSG262 (second edition), HSE Books 2015. <https://books.hse.gov.uk/gempdf/hsg262.pdf>.

Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide HSG53 (fourth edition), HSE Books 2013. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg53.htm>

Preventing contact dermatitis and urticaria at work INDG233(rev2), HSE Books 2015. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg233.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

- Do you understand the health hazards associated with your work?
- Are you sure about safe working procedures?
- Do you know how to use controls?
- 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.
- Never clean your hands with concentrated cleaning products or solvents.
- 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.