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COSHH essentials for agriculture



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, supervisors and 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.

Harvesting grain and seed crops

Control approach 2 Engineering control

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good control practice when using a combine harvester with a filtered air supply to the cab.

It covers the key points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level. Follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Hazards

- ✓ High dust levels are produced during harvesting.
- ✓ Dust created by grain and seed harvesting contains bacteria, endotoxin, fungi and insect residues, and can cause lung diseases such as asthma, chronic bronchitis and farmer's lung.
- ✓ Grain dust has a workplace exposure limit (WEL) of 10 mg/m³ (based on an 8-hour time-weighted average). You need to keep exposures as low as is reasonably practicable below this limit.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational lung diseases developing – this means short-term as well as long-term exposure.

Caution: Some dusts (eg from barley) are very irritating to skin, eyes and the respiratory tract. You will need to consider this and select the appropriate exposure controls as part of managing the risks.

Access to work area

- ✓ Allow access to authorised and appropriately trained people only.

Equipment and procedures

Combine harvester

- ✓ Use a combine harvester with an enclosed, ventilated cab fitted with filtered air intakes.
- ✓ Check that the clean air is turned on and working.
- ✓ Check any air conditioning. Self-test every time you start the harvester.
- ✓ Close the cab doors and windows to keep dust out.

Tractor

- ✓ Where reasonably practicable use a tractor with an enclosed, ventilated cab fitted with filtered air intakes for trailers collecting grain from the harvester.
- ✓ Close the cab doors and windows to keep dust out.
- ✓ Try to stay upwind of dust clouds.
- ✓ If this is not possible use respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ RPE is normally not needed if the cab filters work properly.
- ✓ Provide RPE for maintenance and cleaning inside the machinery, or where dust clouds are unavoidable.
- ✓ Provide RPE with a UK Standard Assigned Protection Factor (APF) of at least 10.
- ✓ Fit testing is required for RPE with a tight fitting face seal.
- ✓ Workers wearing tight fitting RPE must be clean shaven, trained how to fit it properly and look after it.
- ✓ Tell workers to discard disposable RPE at the end of the shift, or sooner if their RPE becomes blocked with dust.
- ✓ 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; or
 - they become harder to breathe through.
- ✓ Examine and test non-disposable RPE thoroughly at least once every month and record this.
- ✓ Tell workers to check RPE is working properly before every use and record this.
- ✓ If RPE is required for extended periods, eg longer than 1 hour, use powered respirators.
- ✓ Make suitable arrangements for maintenance, storage and replacement of RPE.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ PPE should not be needed if the cab filters work properly.
- ✓ Provide PPE for maintenance and cleaning inside the machinery, or where dust clouds are unavoidable.
- ✓ Ask your supplier to help you select suitable PPE.
- ✓ Make suitable arrangements for maintenance, storage and replacement of PPE.

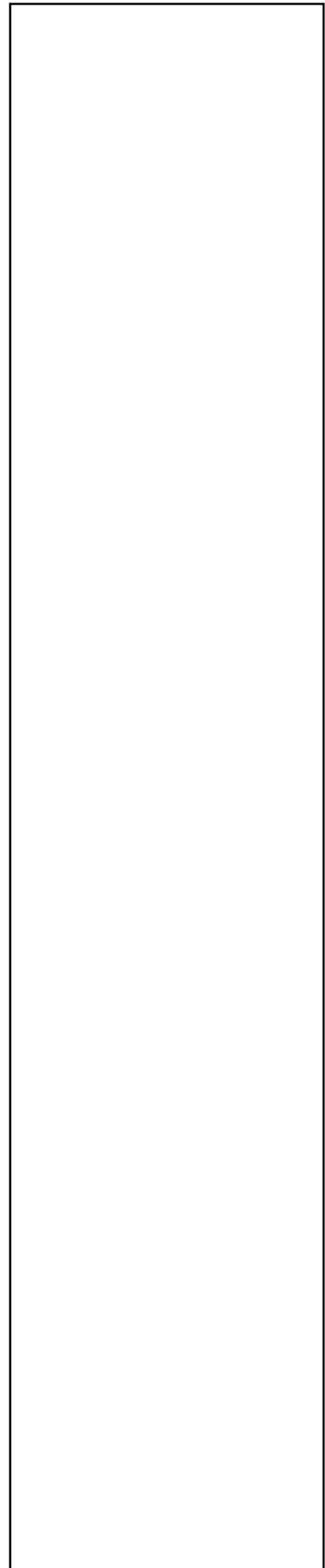
Personal decontamination and skincare

- ✓ 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 dirt from the skin.
- ✓ Provide after-work creams to replenish skin oils.

Caution: 'Barrier creams' are not 'liquid 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.
- ✓ Follow any special procedures before any systems are opened or entered, eg purging or cleaning. Don't forget you may need RPE/PPE for some maintenance tasks.
- ✓ Check all equipment at least once a week for signs of damage or faults.
- ✓ Have equipment thoroughly examined and tested against its performance standard at suitable intervals.



- ✓ Keep records of all examinations for at least 5 years.

Vehicle air filtration

- ✓ Plan regular checks and maintenance of the critical parts.
- ✓ Every day, look for signs of damage, eg door and window seals. Repair damage immediately.
- ✓ Check pre-filters regularly – keep spares.
- ✓ Check that the filter seating is in good condition.
- ✓ Change inlet air HEPA filters as advised by the manufacturer.
- ✓ Get a competent engineer to examine the air filtration at suitable intervals.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Clean the cab at least once a week during harvest.
- ✓ Use vacuum equipment that meets at least dust Class M (medium hazard) classification to remove dust, or use wet cleaning methods.

Caution: Never allow the use of brushes or compressed air for removing dust from skin and clothing. Avoid the use of brushes or compressed air for removing dust from surfaces or from inside machinery.

Health surveillance

- ✓ Provide health surveillance for asthma where there is a reasonable likelihood that asthma may occur in your workplace. See G402.
- ✓ Provide health surveillance for dermatitis where there is a reasonable likelihood that dermatitis may occur in your workplace. See G403.

Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell workers about the hazards associated with their work and how to recognise the early signs of asthma and dermatitis.
- ✓ Provide supervision – ensure that safe work procedures are followed.
- ✓ Provide workers with training on:
 - working safely with hazardous substances;
 - when and how to use controls;
 - how to check they are working;
 - what to do if something goes wrong.
- ✓ Training records are helpful to demonstrate training has taken place.

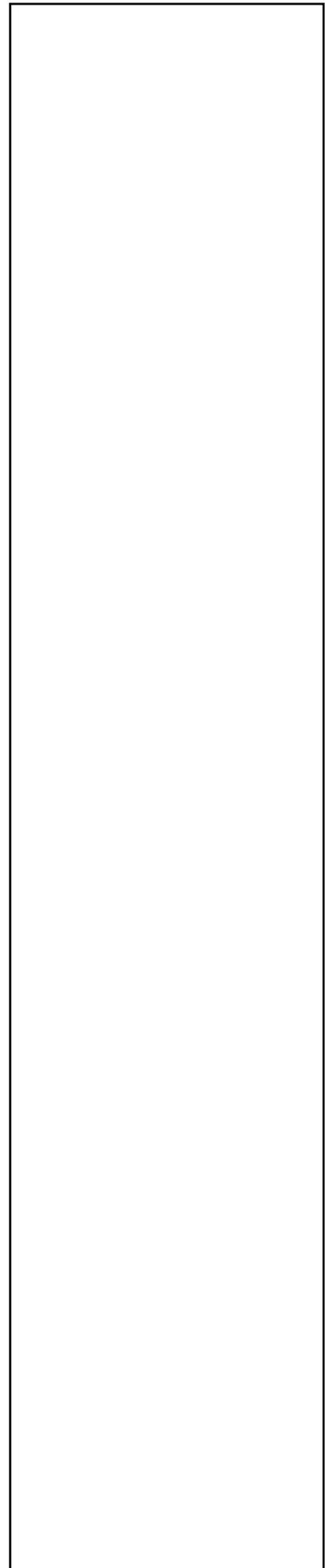
Essential information

You can find the full COSHH essentials series at www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/

Health surveillance for occupational asthma COSHH Guidance Sheet G402 HSE 2011 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g402.pdf

Health surveillance for occupational dermatitis COSHH Guidance Sheet G403 HSE 2011 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g403.pdf

RPE with a UK Standard Assigned Protection Factor 10 (APF10) COSHH Guidance Sheet R2 HSE 2016 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/rpe2.pdf



Further information

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

For other advice on health and safety risks in agriculture see www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/

Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide HSG53 (Fourth edition) HSE 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/HSG53.htm

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

Employee checklist

- Shut cab doors and windows.
- Is the in-cab filtration working properly?
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage before every job.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor. Don't just carry on working.
- Check that your RPE works properly every time you use it.
- Use, maintain and store your PPE and RPE in accordance with instructions.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking or using the lavatory and after work.

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