

AG6

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.

Opening hay, haylage and silage bales

Control approach R Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good control practice when opening hay, haylage and silage bales.

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

Hazards

- ✓ High dust levels can be produced opening bales manually.
- ✓ Properly made hay contains only low levels of spores.
- ✓ Dusts and spores are produced from handling dry hay. These can cause lung diseases such as asthma and farmer's lung.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational lung diseases developing – this means short-term as well as long-term exposure.

Access to work area

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

Equipment and procedures

- ✓ Handle hay, haylage and silage gently to avoid stirring up dust.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ Provide RPE for dusty operations.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Keep RPE clean and store it in a clean place.
- ✓ Make suitable arrangements for maintenance, storage and replacement of RPE.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Provide protective coveralls.
- ✓ 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. Follow instructions in maintenance manuals.
- ✓ Look for signs of damage and make repairs.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Clean work equipment and the work area daily. Clean other equipment at least once a week.
- ✓ Vacuum dry dust or use wet cleaning methods.
- ✓ Use vacuum equipment that meets at least dust Class M (medium hazard) classification to remove dust.

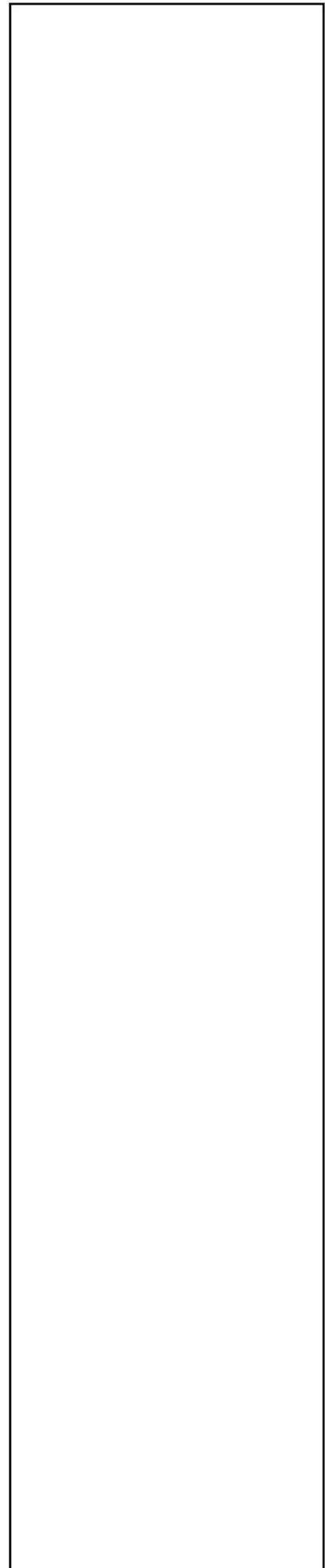
Caution: Never allow the use of brushes or compressed air for removing dust from skin and clothing. Avoid the use of brushes or compressed air for removing dust from surfaces or from inside machinery.

Health surveillance

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

Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell workers about the hazards associated with their work and how to recognise the early signs of asthma.
- ✓ 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

Advice for managers COSHH Guidance Sheet AG0 HSE 2016 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/ag0.pdf

Straw chopping and blowing for mechanised bale opening COSHH Guidance Sheet AG8 HSE 2016 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/ag8.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

- Is your respirator working properly? Check it every time you use it.
- Use, maintain and store your PPE and RPE in accordance with instructions.
- 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.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.
- If you develop any symptoms that may be work related, inform your supervisor.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking, smoking or using the lavatory and after work.

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