

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Control of Substance Hazardous to Health regulations are the main piece of legislation covering control of the risks to staff and other people arising from exposure to harmful substances generated out of or in connection with any work activity under the employer's control. The main objective of the Regulations is to reduce occupational ill health by setting out a simple framework for controlling hazardous substances in the workplace.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This procedure is applicable no later than 1st January 2011 and covers all campuses involving University staff, students and visitors.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 In terms of the Regulations, a Substance Hazardous to Health is:
- One that has already been classified as being very toxic (T+), toxic (T), harmful (X), corrosive (C) or irritant (Xi) under the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging) Regulations or CHIP (The Approved Supply List); or
 - A substance which has been assigned exposure limits or a substance that is carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction; or
 - A biological agent; or
 - A dust in substantial concentrations in air; and
 - Any substance not mentioned above but which creates a hazard to health comparable to those mentioned above

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Vice-Chancellor

On behalf of the Council the Vice-Chancellor has executive responsibility to ensure, that the requirements of the health and safety legislation and the University health and safety policy are complied with. The Vice-

- Chancellor will ensure that responsibility for health and safety is properly assigned and accepted at all levels within the University.
- 4.2 Legal duties under COSHH are laid primarily on Managers and it is their duty to see that proper systems of work and management are in place. Many of the duties that Managers owe to their staff, extends to students and visitors, who may be affected by the work of the University. In particular, students and visitors or outside contractors need to be given information and training on how to deal with hazardous substances they may encounter in the course of their work or study within the University.
 - 4.3 Duties on staff include making proper use of any control measures, following safe systems of work, abiding by local rules and reporting defects in safety equipment.
 - 4.4 Staff should not bring hazardous chemicals into the university. If products are used that are not purchased by the university the relevant line manager must be informed by the person who brought the substance on campus. The line manager needs then to decide on appropriate safety controls.
 - 4.5 Students and visitors must not bring hazardous chemicals into the university. Students or visitors have no specific duties under COSHH but they must comply with the general health and safety requirements such as wearing gloves, masks etc, provided and not misusing anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare.

5. PROCEDURE

- 5.1 The risk assessment procedure is to be followed to manage risks from hazardous substances
http://www.ulster.ac.uk/healthandsafety/Procedures/risk_assessment.pdf
Single chemicals can be assessed using the generic risk assessment form but for multiple substances it is recommended that you use the HSE COSHH Essentials system. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm>

- 5.2 "Suitable and sufficient" assessment includes determining the hazardous substances that are likely to be encountered, thinking about the risks they present to health, asking how much and how often the substances are used, how hazardous they are and what are the exposure routes and finally deciding on the action needed to prevent exposure or to reduce it as far as is reasonably practicable. This will also include the actions to be taken in an Emergency, to clear up any spills and to safely dispose of any residues. Except for the most trivial cases, the conclusions of this assessment must be recorded, made readily accessible and reviewed regularly.

Preventing or Controlling Exposure

- 5.3 Managers must ensure that the exposure of staff to hazardous substances is either prevented (i.e. no exposure) or adequately controlled. If it is reasonably practicable, exposure must be prevented by changing the process or activity so that the hazardous substance is not required or generated, or replacing it with a safer alternative, (especially important if the substance is a carcinogen), or using it in a safer form. If prevention is not reasonably practicable, exposure must be adequately controlled by one or more of the measures outlined in the Regulations e.g. total enclosure of the process, suitable ventilation etc. (If total enclosure is not practicable for a carcinogen then all the other methods of control mentioned in the Regulations must be used.)
- 5.4 Adequate control of volatile or airborne substances can be assessed by reference to the set exposure limits.
- 5.5 Adequate control also means having systems in place to deal with emergencies, spills and disposal.
- 5.6 Only as a last resort should personal protective equipment be used as a means of protection. (However, the routine wearing of laboratory coats and safety glasses is generally regarded as a basic measure to minimise risks from foreseeable hazards - it is not reasonably practicable to provide other means of protection for workers and especially for their eyes.)

Ensuring that Control Measures are Used and Maintained

- 5.7 Staff are required to make proper use of control measures (e.g. fume-hoods) and to report defects and Managers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that they do so. Managers must also ensure that the equipment is kept in efficient working order and good repair and that it is tested regularly.

Monitoring Exposure and Health Surveillance

- 5.8 Monitoring of the concentrations of hazardous substances in the air must be carried out in certain circumstances e.g. where there could be a serious risk to health if control measures failed or deteriorated.
- 5.9 Where the assessment has shown this to be necessary e.g. use of a substance known to cause occupational asthma or severe dermatitis, then health surveillance must be carried out. Please contact the University's Occupational Health Nurses on ext 68375 (Jordanstown and Belfast campuses) or ext 24335 (Coleraine and Magee) COSHH assessments must have been completed before requesting Health Surveillance.

Information, Training and Supervision

- 5.10 Training is available from staff Development on COSHH risk assessment.
- 5.11 The information from COSHH risks assessments must be passed on from line managers to their staff. COSHH assessments and accompanying Material Safety Data Sheets should be readily accessible for the staff using/exposed to the substances at all times.
- 5.12 COSHH requires that Managers provide their staff with suitable information, instruction and training about:
- The nature of the substances they work with or are exposed to;
 - The risks created by exposure to those substances; and
 - The precautions they should take
- 5.13 Managers should give sufficient information and instruction on
- Control measures and how to use them;
 - The use of any personal protective equipment and clothing;
 - The results of any exposure monitoring or health surveillance; and
 - Emergency procedures.

Carcinogens

- 5.14 Carcinogens are treated separately by COSHH with an individual Approved Code of Practice and the rules for their use are stringent. Their use requires justification, the use of all recommended control measures and record keeping. Please contact Health and Safety Services for advice healthandsafety@ulster.ac.uk.

6. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order (1978)
- UUHSM 31 – risk assessment
- UUHSM 37 – Procedural arrangements in the event of an exposure to blood borne virus