

BFAWU GUIDE TO THE CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)

Because of the nature of the Industry that we work in, our members will come into contact with chemicals and substances, on a daily basis, that can be detrimental to their health if they do not take remedial action. This section is a brief guide on how to reduce the risk of injury and ill health following a tried and tested methodology.

The C.O.S.H.H legislation puts specific responsibilities on the Employer as follows:

They must assess the possible risks to health that may occur due to exposure to the substance before it is used.

They must ensure prevention or practical control to exposure.

They have a duty to ensure that the control measures are used, adequately maintained and that they are examined and tested.

They should monitor exposure and carry out health surveillance.

They should ensure that their employees are informed of the hazards, instructed and that they are given adequate training.

The Employer should review the risk assessment on a regular basis.

Too often we find that the first control measure that the Employer adopts is the use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). There is a hierarchy of control measures under Regulation 7 and it would be a wrong procedure if PPE was employed, without first considering all the other factors. That is not to say that PPE cannot be used in tandem with the other control measures, should the risk assessment find it necessary. Personal Protective Equipment DOES NOT REMOVE THE HAZARD. The hierarchal ladder of control measures is as follows:

PREVENT EXPOSURE BY

Eliminating the substance.

Substitution with a substance less hazardous to health.

CONTROL EXPOSURE BY

Total enclosure of the process, therefore removing exposure.

Limiting the area of contamination.



The use of LEV (Local Exhaust Ventilation).
Dilution Ventilation.

Reducing the period of exposure.
Providing suitable PPE.

It should be remembered that the C.O.S.H.H Regulations relate to any substance irrespective of its form including, gas, solid, dust, liquid, vapour, aerosol or micro-organisms. Furthermore substances not deemed to be detrimental to health can cause problems if not used correctly.

Further information is available from your local Regional Office.



YOUR BETTER PROTECTED IN THE BFAWU