

SAFE WORKING PROCEDURE

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY | VERSION 6.3 | July 2025

STATEMENT:

In order to comply with legislation and fulfil statutory responsibility, the Council must make sure that:

- Substances hazardous to health have been identified, risk assessed, and precautions implemented to reduce the level of risk to the lowest practicable level.
- Control measures are used and maintained.
- Employees identified as exposed to hazardous substances receive health surveillance, information, instruction and training on the processes and controls in place.

SCOPE:

This Safe Working Procedure applies to:

- All managers including headteachers.
- All employees of Southampton City Council.
- All contractors working on behalf of the Council.

Version Control		
This Safe Working Procedure is issued and managed by Corporate Health and Safety Service.		
Version Number	Date	Amendments
Version 1.00	Aug 1989	
Version 2.00	Unknown	
Version 3.00	Unknown	
Version 4.00	May 2004	
Version 5.00	Jun 2010	
Version 5.01	June 2012	Minor amendments
Version 5.02	Dec 2015	Updated to cover new symbols and CMS 8
Version 6.0	Apr 2020	General review
Version 6.1	Dec 2022	General Review
Version 6.2	June 2024	Periodic Review
Version 6.03	July 2025	Minor Amendment SYPOL Details amendments
Review Conducted		Next Review Date
		June 2013
Dec 2015		Dec 2016
Apr 2020		Apr 2022
Dec 2022		Dec 2024
June 2024		June 2026

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1. Responsibilities

Senior Managers/Head Teachers are responsible for ensuring compliance with this SWP and must:

- 1.1. Ensure substances/work processes that are hazardous to health are risk assessed and controls implemented to reduce the level of risk to the lowest practicable level.
- 1.2. Ensure the maintenance and condition of any control measures implemented i.e. Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) systems/Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE).
- 1.3. Ensure information, instruction and training where hazards have been identified and where appropriate, health surveillance is provided.

Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with the SWP and must:

- 1.4. Identify and risk assess all substances/work processes that are hazardous to health (consider young persons, inexperienced persons including apprentices, new and expectant mothers, known health conditions).
- 1.5. Where applicable, complete a DSEAR risk assessment for the use and storage of explosive flammable substances (See [SWP DSEAR](#)).
- 1.6. Identify control measures and ensure they are used and maintained in accordance with manufacturers recommendations (See [Appendix 1](#)).
- 1.7. Maintain equipment in a suitable and safe condition.
- 1.8. Where identified, provide information, instruction and training on the controls and where appropriate, health surveillance.
- 1.9. Keep records of assessments, inspections, maintenance, and health surveillance.
- 1.10. Periodically assess the products listed under own 'work area' in the SYPOL database and forward any editorial requests to the Corporate Health and Safety Service for update.
- 1.11. Request from the manufacturer the Safety Data Sheet for all new products.
- 1.12. Complete a CARQ form to reflect the product use.
- 1.13. Forward both the Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet and the CARQ form to Corporate Health and Safety Service for editorial update onto the SYPOL database.
- 1.14. Attach the COSHH risk assessment to the HSMS report where an employee has recorded an adverse health effect to a product/substance provided.

Employees must:

- 1.15. Comply with risk assessments and control measures identified i.e. personal protective equipment. Report any bad working practices and/or defective equipment immediately and take out of use.
- 1.16. Report any ill-health effects on HSMS (if as a result of work activities).
- 1.17. Report to manager any health issues, or if pregnant or pregnancy is a consideration.

Corporate Health and Safety Service carry out the role of 'Editor' for the SYPOL Database and will:

- 1.18. Maintain contents of SYPOL database assessments upon request.
- 1.19. Request new product data from SYPOL upon receipt of the Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) and CARQ form.

2. Procedures

2.1. Identification of Hazardous Substances and/or Work Processes








Substances hazardous to health can include any material, mixture or compound used at work or arising from work activities which is harmful to people's health including:

- 2.1.1 Specific categories of substances labelled as Dangerous to the Environment, toxic, harmful/irritant, corrosive, oxidising, flammable, and explosive.

- 2.1.2 From June 2015 the Global Harmonised System uses slightly different pictograms, notably, using a red inverted square which replaces the familiar orange symbols, which are no longer used.

However the pictures are largely the same, with the exception of the 'harmful' symbol which is changed from a cross (X) to an exclamation mark (!).

There are also new symbols for "serious long term health effects" and Contains gas under pressure".

What do the COSHH symbols mean?		
 Dangerous to the environment	 Toxic	 Gas under pressure
 Corrosive	 Explosive	 Flammable
 Caution – used for less serious health hazards like skin irritation	 Oxidising	 Longer term health hazards such as carcinogenicity

- 2.1.3 Any substance that has been assigned a workplace exposure limit (WEL). These are identified in [EH40 Workplace Exposure Limits](#).
- 2.1.4 Dusts of any kind (not including the ones assigned a WEL) can become hazardous in concentrations in air greater than 10 mg/m³ inhaled dust, or 4 mg/m³ of respirable dust – further information can be found on the [HSE website – Air Sampling Guidance](#).
- 2.1.5 Biological agents such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites.

- 2.1.6 Asphyxiates such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen.
- 2.1.7 Carcinogens such as tobacco smoke or radon gas.

2.2. COSHH Risk Assessment

- 2.2.1. Managers/headteachers must assess the work activities and hazardous substances in use within the workplace. Information on how to identify the hazards and control the risks can be found on the HSE website – [Identifying Hazard and Assessing Risk](#).
- 2.2.2. The management controls that must be considered prior to the use of a hazardous substance are identified in Appendix 1.
- 2.2.3. Southampton City Council provides access to the online SYPOL CMS COSHH risk assessment system; this contains COSHH assessments on all chemicals and substances that employees use as part of their work. This database allows folder holders to view their COSHH assessments online and also to print off assessments for local use.
- 2.2.4. To access [SYPOL CMS Online COSHH System](#), please email health.and.safety@southampton.gov.uk
- 2.2.5. Once you have gained access, select the Facility: **Southampton** to access the area folders and the assessments identified for the area. Further information on accessing the system can be found on the Corporate Health and Safety intranet site.
- 2.2.6. For products not listed on the SYPOL database, a Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is required, (contact manufacturer directly or access the data sheets through the internet) in addition, completion of a CARQ form is required. Forward the CARQ card and MSDS to Corporate Health and Safety Service who will obtain the required assessment from SYPOL.
- 2.2.7. COSHH awareness training is available through Learning and Development, and is recommended for employees who work in or manage environments where there are large quantities or hazardous substances in use or produced.
- 2.2.8. Further information on measuring and monitoring air samples for contamination can be found on the [HSE website – Air Sampling Guidance](#).
- 2.2.9. COSHH risk assessments must be made available to staff using the products, and the controls recommended implemented, monitored and recorded.
- 2.2.10. Risk assessments must be reviewed:
 - 2.2.10.1. Periodically (schedule into management plan);
 - 2.2.10.2. When there is reason to believe an assessment is no longer valid;
 - 2.2.10.3. Where there has been a significant change in the work;
- 2.2.11. If the employees' work activities include exposure to biological factors, i.e. blood, bodily fluids, information on the hazards and controls can be found on:
 - 2.2.11.1. HSE website – [Infections at Work](#);
 - 2.2.11.2. Guidance document: COSHH – Communicable Diseases;
 - 2.2.11.3. SWP Contamination and Needlesticks Incidents;

2.3. Control Measures are Used and Maintained

- 2.3.1. Employees are to ensure that they make proper use of control measures and report defects in them. The manager must take all reasonable steps to ensure that control measures are working effectively and that staff are using them correctly. Employees must receive instruction, information and training and be appropriately supervised.
- 2.3.2. Managers must retain records of examinations, tests and maintenance carried out for the life of the equipment, and be carried out in compliance with manufacturers' recommendations.
- 2.3.3. The concentration of hazardous substances in the air that employees might be exposed to should be monitored and possibly measured in certain cases:
 - 2.3.3.1. Where there could be serious risks to health if control measures failed or deteriorated;
 - 2.3.3.2. If there is uncertainty that exposure limits are not being exceeded;
- 2.3.4. The results of any monitoring must be communicated to the staff who took part in the monitoring and others that might be affected. Any personal exposure monitoring that is carried out, retain within personal file.

2.4. Health Surveillance

- 2.4.1. Controlled use of most substances in modest amounts will not result in the need to put employees on a health surveillance programme. However, they may need to be under a scheme of health surveillance should employees have significant exposure to such substances as:
 - 2.4.1.1. Wood dust (wood machinist, carpenter, or technician in a school workshop);
 - 2.4.1.2. Tar and pitch (employees engaged on highway maintenance);
 - 2.4.1.3. Mineral oil (vehicle workshops);
 - 2.4.1.4. Solvents (painters);
 - 2.4.1.5. Electrical solder fumes (technician in a school workshop);
 - 2.4.1.6. Welding fumes (welder);
 - 2.4.1.7. Some pesticides (gardener);
 - 2.4.1.8. Some glues/resins curing of epoxy resins (carpenters, painters);
- 2.4.2. Following a risk assessment, managers should complete the Health Surveillance Checklist and then contact Occupational Health team.
- 2.4.3. Details on the referral process can be found on the Occupational Health intranet page – Referral Process.
- 2.4.4. In many cases the Occupational Health Service will be able to carry out the health surveillance or arrange for it to be carried out. In other cases they can advise how Divisions/Services/Sections themselves can carry out health surveillance and identify controls for both managers and the individuals. See SWP Health Surveillance for further information.

2.5. Retention of Health Surveillance records

COSHH Regulations require records to be retained for 40 years as ill health effects might not emerge until a long time after exposure.

3. Safe Working Procedures Relevant to This Document

- 3.1 SWP Health Surveillance
- 3.2 SWP Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulation (DSEAR)
- 3.3 SWP Managing Health and Safety
- 3.4 SWP New and Expectant Mothers
- 3.5 SWP Risk Assessment
- 3.6 SWP Young Persons
- 3.7 SWP Work Equipment
- 3.8 SWP Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigation
- 3.9 SWP Personal Protective Equipment

3.10 [Related Forms](#)

- 3.10.1. DSEAR Risk Assessment

Note: Other safe working procedures may apply and the assessor should consult the SWPs. An A-Z is available on the Council's [Health and Safety Intranet](#) and [School web site](#)

4. Main Legislation Relevant to This Document

- 4.1 [Health and Safety at Work etc Act](#)
- 4.2 [The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations](#)
- 4.3 [The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations](#)

5. Contact Address's and Guidance Links

- 5.1 Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.gov.uk
 - 5.1.1. [Five Steps to Risk Assessment](#)
 - 5.1.2. [COSHH](#)
 - 5.1.3. INDG136 – [What you need to know about COSHH \(HSE guidance\)](#)
 - 5.1.4. L5 – [COSHH: Approved Code of Practice and guidance](#)
 - 5.1.5. [EH40](#) Workplace Exposure Limits
 - 5.1.6. [Blood Borne Diseases in the Workplace](#)
 - 5.1.7. [Infections at Work – Controlling the Risks](#)
 - 5.1.8. [PPE](#)
- 5.2 Corporate Health and Safety Service
[Health and Safety Intranet](#)
[Schools Web Site](#)

For full contact address visit the health and safety intranet [Useful Contacts](#).

Control of Substances – Control Measures

