



Contractors' COSHH duties

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) specify the requirements about what employers need to do to minimise the risk of the health of their employees from exposure to hazardous substances at work.

COSHH is the law that Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 oblige employers to either prevent or reduce their workers' exposure to substances that are hazardous to their health. COSHH provides tools to recognise, evaluate, control risks on construction site.

COSHH Procedure Step by Step:

1. Assess the risks
2. Decide on precautions
3. Prevent and control exposure
4. Ensure all measures are used
5. Carry out health surveillance
6. Plan for emergencies
7. Train and supervise employees

Employers must provide information about the hazards, risks and control measures, and instruction and training to use the control measures. All employers must carry out a risk assessment and those employing five or more employees must also record significant findings. This record needs to be accessible so that safety representatives, inspec-

tors, etc. can examine it. The assessment should be reviewed as often as necessary, if circumstances changed.

COSHH essential e-tool allows for quick assessments of substances that you use. COSHH The hazardous substances include chemicals, fumes, dusts, vapours, gases, fibres, biological agents, non-particles. On the building site the most common are silica and asbestos. COSHH training is often required to identify, measure and control the exposure to harmful substances.

Breath Freely, the Chartered Society for Worker Health Protection and Arco Experts offers Construction Managers Toolkit Checklist that can be downloaded here <http://www.breathefreely.org.uk/assets/bf-cmt-cossh-site-checklist-april-2017.pdf>

Some of the questions construction site managers should ask during their health & safety assessment are for instance:

- Do you have a hazardous substances controller on site?
- Do you check subcontractors?
- Do you have a list of hazardous substances used on site?
- Do you have COSHH assessment?
- Do you have health and safety procedures?
- What are measures to reduce risk and exposures?
- Do your workers and subcontractors use the right respirators?
- Have workers had a face fit test?
- Do you provide the right PPE?

- Are there any people who are trained as first aiders?
- Do you monitor exposure to hazardous substances?
- Do your workers have health checks?
- Do you keep records of tests, procedures, measures, health checks etc.?

Another tool useful for construction managers or employers for health and safety purposes is the Health in Industry Management Standard. The HI standard is a simple self-assessment tool to help contractors and site managers to better manage workplace health risks. It allows to identify strengths and weaknesses, set priorities and develop action plans. This tool can be used by companies of all sizes to assess their health and safety on construction sites and develop action plans. This tool is available to download from www.breathefreely.org.uk

Construction workers are at high risk to develop lung disease and occupational cancer. Contractors and employers should ensure there are dust control measures on building sites, especially during demolition works. Risk should be assessed also for the following works: paint removal, welding, wood dust, silica, diesel fume.

Respiratory protective equipment should be used for most construction tasks including sanding, plastering, brick cutting, tile cutting and cement mixing. For works with higher exposure powered respiratory protective equipment (RPE), in conjunction with a welding visor and/or a purified air-powered helmet should be used.

(Source: HSE, BOHS.org)