

S100

COSHH essentials: Harm via skin or eye contact



This information will help employers comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to chemicals and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet covers general points on skin exposure.

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Skin or eye contact

Control approach S Supplementary advice

Contact with skin and eyes

- ✓ Liquids and solids can contact skin and eyes in the following ways:
 - direct contact – handling, immersion;
 - splashes and dust or spray settling on the skin; and
 - touching contaminated surfaces, including work clothing.
- ✓ Skin contact is almost inevitable. Once the hands are contaminated, contamination spreads to other parts of the skin or into the mouth by touching or scratching.

Exposure control

- ✓ Reduce the chance of contact with skin or eyes:
 - modify the process to minimise handling;
 - change the physical form – to granules from dusty powders, or to pastes from liquids;
 - segregate clean and dirty areas to reduce the spread of contamination;
 - provide smooth, impervious, easily cleaned surfaces;
 - launder work clothing regularly;
 - provide clean washrooms, with pre-work creams and after-work creams for skin care;
 - tell workers about the risk and about good personal hygiene;
 - check skin for dryness or soreness regularly;
 - clean the workroom regularly;
 - provide eye protection where there are splash risks; and
 - plan how to deal with spillages swiftly and safely.
- ✓ Workers should wash their hands before and after eating, drinking, smoking, using the lavatory or applying cosmetics.
- ✓ See Sheet S101 for advice on selecting protective gloves and S102 for other PPE.

Useful links

- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at www.bohs.org for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see www.nhsplus.nhs.uk.