Notes on Completing the COSHH Risk Assessment Forms

Note 1 – Choose a title or give a serial number to facilitate departmental filing and retrieval of risk assessments.

Note 2 – These forms must be completed before any work with substances hazardous to health is begun, so that a suitable and sufficient assessment of the health risks is made. This assessment should be reviewed immediately if there is any reason to suppose that the original assessment is no longer valid due to significant changes in the work activity.

Note 3 – A copy of this assessment must be given to each staff member postgraduate research student or to each 3rd or 4th year undergraduate performing the work, and he/she must sign as receipt. When this assessment is reviewed, add below the signature of the reviewer, the date and whether the assessment was changed. Any signatories still covered by a modified assessment must then sign again to show that they are aware of the change.

Note 4 – The COSHH regulations do not apply where either the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations or the Control of Lead at Work Regulations apply, or where the risk to health is solely from radiation, noise or pressure or similar physical hazards, nor to medicines administered as part of a controlled medical trial. Similarly the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations cover the fire issues inherent in the use of many laboratory solvents. However, it is recommended that this risk assessment should cover both COSHH and DSEAR.

A substance should be regarded as hazardous to health if it is hazardous in the form in which it occurs in the work activity, including by-products and waste residues. The regulations specify these criteria for such a decision. (A) **substance hazardous to health means a substance:**

- Which is listed in Part 1 of the approved supply list of the CHIP regulations

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1 The Chemical (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002, SI 2002 No 1689
• For which the Heath and Safety Commission has approved an exposure limit (OES, MEL, or WEL)
• Which is a biological agent (See Form RA2)
• Which is dust of any kind when present in air a concentration in air equal or greater than 10mg/m³ TWA of inhalable dust or 4 mg/m³ of respirable dust.
• Which because of its chemical or toxicological properties and the way it is used or is present at the workplace creates a risk to health.

For the Hazard Identification section: -
A - Name the substance or group of substances to be used in the activity and list in the columns below together with their particular exposure limit. Verify that no safer alternative could be used.
B – Classify each of the substances according to the most significant of the following categories; very toxic [VT]; toxic [T]; corrosive [CO]; irritant [IR]; harmful [H]; carcinogen/mutagen/teratogens [CMT].
C – Decide whether or not the substances as used in the procedure present a Low, Medium or High risk to the user.

Note 5 – Where an assessment of risk is simple and obvious and where the work activity is straightforward and clear verbal instructions can be easily given, a written scheme of work is unnecessary.

Note 6 – The scheme of work is a statement of how the work activity is going to be carried out safely. It should specify the ways in which the hazardous substances are to be used or handled, and should give sufficient details to identify the precautions necessary to control the risks that arise from working with the hazardous substances.

Note 7 – Any specific training required to ensure that persons involved in the work activity can operate safely should be described here. This is particularly important so that persons can understand and comply effectively with the scheme of work, where this has been formulated.

Note 8 – The level of supervision must always be appropriate to the competence of the individuals involved in the work activity.
Note 9 – For the majority of work, atmospheric monitoring should not be necessary for protecting health, providing sufficient thought has gone into ensuring the adequacy of control measures in relation to risks, and the control measures are properly used and maintained. For further information on monitoring and health surveillance see the Approved Code of Practice under the Regs, paragraphs 186-238.

Note 10 – Contingency planning is required to limit the extent of the risk arising from an uncontrolled release of a hazardous substance and for regaining control as quickly as possible.