










COSHH

Reason	Hazardous substances can be used in, or created by, construction processes. Using hazardous substances without the proper controls in place can damage your health.
Outline	This talk covers risk assessment, hazards, control measures and safe use of substances.

Globally harmonised pictograms

	Acute toxicity, very toxic or toxic. Can be fatal if swallowed or inhaled.		Hazardous to the environment and aquatic life.
	Contains gases under pressure. May explode if heated and can cause burns.		Oxidising gases, liquids and solids. May cause or intensify fire.
	Harmful skin, eye or respiratory irritation. May cause an allergic reaction, drowsiness or breathing difficulties.		Aspiration hazard. Damage to organs and may cause serious longer term health hazards (such as carcinogenicity, respiratory sensitisation and reproductive toxicity).
	Flammable gases, liquids, solids and aerosols. Heating may cause a fire.		Corrosive and can cause severe skin damage or burns.
	Explosive, self reactive. Heating may cause an explosion.		



Always follow your employer's safe system of work when working with hazardous substances.

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Risk assessment

1. A competent person must carry out a risk assessment to decide whether:
 - a less hazardous substance can be used instead
 - exposure to a substance can be avoided
 - alternative work methods can reduce exposure.
2. Many of the substances used in construction have the potential to cause harm.

Hazards

1. Hazardous substances can enter the body in four ways. These are known as routes of entry and are:
 - ingestion – eating food contaminated with the hazardous substance
 - inhalation – breathing in harmful dust or fumes
 - injection – sharp objects or high-pressure fluids
 - absorption – chemicals entering through cuts.
2. Examples of hazardous substances on construction sites include:
 - contaminated ground
 - concrete admixtures
 - epoxy-based paints
 - cement
 - solvent fumes
 - welding fumes
 - hardwood dust
 - resins
 - asbestos.
3. Don't mix chemicals or substances unless you are following a safe and authorised process.

Control measures

1. Follow your employer's safe system of work and the risk (COSHH) assessment for each substance.
2. When using hazardous substances, wear the correct personal protective equipment (PPE), if required.
3. Know how to look after and use your PPE correctly.
4. Ensure hazardous substances are put back into a secure location after use. Do not leave them on site.

Safe use of substances

1. Make sure you are trained to use hazardous substances.
2. Comply with the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) assessment and the instructions on the product label.
3. Don't eat, drink or smoke when handling substances.
4. Don't expose others to fumes, dust, gas or other dangers from hazardous substances.
5. Wash your hands when you have finished using a product, before using another product, before eating or smoking and at the end of your shift.



What should you consider before using a substance?

What are the four ways that a substance can enter your body?

Where should substances be put at the end of a shift?

Where can you obtain information from about the hazardous substance you are using?

What can you wear to protect yourself against substances?

What hazardous substances might you find on site?