

COSHH Assessment Procedure

SOP · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A COSHH assessment procedure is the written process your organisation follows to identify substances hazardous to health, work out who could be exposed and how, and put controls in place before anyone works with the substance. COSHH stands for the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health — the UK regime covering chemicals, cleaning products, dusts, fumes, vapours, and biological agents used or created at work.

Most small businesses hold far more COSHH-relevant substances than they realise: the cellar-line cleaner behind the bar, the descaler in the kitchen, the solvent in the workshop, the flour dust in the bakery. An assessment is not paperwork about the bottle — it is the decision about how the job gets done safely, and it is what an inspector asks to see after a chemical incident.

This template gives you a complete, ready-to-edit procedure: building a substance inventory, using safety data sheets properly, a step-by-step assessment method, the hierarchy of controls, and the records that prove exposure is managed.

Purpose and scope

This procedure sets out how [Your company] assesses and controls substances hazardous to health at [site name]. It covers substances we buy (cleaning chemicals, [others]), substances our work creates (dusts, fumes, [others]), and biological agents where relevant.

It applies to all employees and to contractors who bring substances onto our site, at all times.

When to use this procedure

- Before any new substance is bought or brought on site for the first time.
- Before an existing substance is used for a new task, in a new location, or by a new group of staff.
- When a safety data sheet is updated or a supplier reformulates a product.
- At the scheduled review date of an existing assessment, or after any exposure incident, spill, or near-miss.

Roles and responsibilities

- COSHH lead ([name/role]): owns the substance inventory, completes or approves assessments, and keeps safety data sheets current.
- Managers: make sure no substance is used in their area without a current assessment, and that staff follow the controls it sets.
- All staff: use substances only as the assessment describes, wear the protective equipment it specifies, and report damaged labels, missing data sheets, spills, and any symptoms such as skin or breathing irritation.
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Purchasing ([name/role]): does not order new substances without confirming an assessment exists or is planned.

Before you start

- Build and maintain the substance inventory: every product and process-generated substance on site, listed in [system/location] with its location and use.
- Obtain the current safety data sheet for every bought product from the supplier and file it in [location]. A data sheet is the input to an assessment, not a substitute for one.
- Check the hazard warning symbols and hazard statements on the label — they tell you what type of harm the substance can cause.
- Identify who could be exposed, including cleaners, maintenance staff, contractors, and anyone nearby — not just the person doing the task.

Step-by-step COSHH assessment

1. Identify the substance and the task: what is used or created, where, how often, in what quantity, and by whom.
2. Establish the harm it can cause from the safety data sheet and label: inhalation, skin contact, ingestion, eye damage, or longer-term health effects.
3. Identify the routes of exposure for this task as actually performed — watch the job being done rather than assuming.
4. Ask first whether the substance or process can be eliminated, or a less hazardous alternative substituted: [record what was considered].
5. Where the substance stays, select controls in order of preference: enclose or automate the process, provide ventilation or extraction, reduce quantities and exposure time, then specify protective equipment as the final layer.
6. Write the safe working method into the assessment: dilution rates from the manufacturer's instructions, mixing prohibitions (never mix [e.g. bleach-based and acidic products]), storage, and disposal.
7. Record the assessment in [system/location], brief every user on it, and have them acknowledge the briefing.
8. Set the review date: [frequency, e.g. annually], or sooner if the product, task, or supplier changes.

Storage, labelling, and disposal

- Store substances as the data sheet requires, in [location], segregated where incompatible, and secured from public or unauthorised access.
- Keep substances in their original labelled containers. Decanting into unlabelled bottles — especially drinks bottles — is prohibited without exception.
- Dispose of substances and contaminated materials as the assessment describes: [method/contractor]. Never pour concentrates down drains unless the assessment explicitly permits it.

If something goes wrong

1. For any exposure — splash, inhalation, ingestion — follow the first aid measures in the safety data sheet immediately and involve a first aider.
2. For spills, follow the spill response in the assessment: ventilate, keep others away, and use the spill kit at [location] with the protective equipment specified.
3. Report the incident the same day under our accident and incident reporting procedure, keeping the product and data sheet available for medical staff if needed.
4. The COSHH lead reviews the relevant assessment before the task is done again.

Records and review

The substance inventory, assessments, data sheets, briefing acknowledgments, and any maintenance records for extraction or ventilation equipment are kept in [system/location] and retained for [period]. Certain health and exposure records carry long statutory retention periods — check current HSE guidance before destroying anything.

This procedure is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and after any exposure incident. Owner: [name/role].
Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Walk the site and physically list every substance before editing anything — check under sinks, in cellars, and in the maintenance cupboard, not just the COSHH cabinet.
2. Request current safety data sheets from suppliers now; chasing them takes longer than writing the assessments.
3. Assess the highest-risk and most-used substances first rather than working alphabetically.
4. Watch each task being done before you assess it — the written method and the real method often differ.
5. Fill every [bracketed placeholder], then brief users on each finished assessment and record the briefing.
6. Set review dates and add "COSHH assessment exists?" as a purchasing check for any new product.

Official guidance

- › [HSE — COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health](#)
- › [HSE — Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/coshh-assessment-procedure> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.