

COSHH ASSESSMENT · UNITED KINGDOM · 2026

COSHH Assessment

UK template and structure for a Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 2002 assessment — WELs, RPE, health surveillance.

A COSHH assessment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended) is required for any substance hazardous to health used at work — adhesives, solvents, paints, cement (silica is the main UK construction COSHH driver), MDI in insulation, oils, dusts, fumes from cutting and welding. The assessment is product-specific and task-specific; a single COSHH for 'all site chemicals' is non-compliant on its face.

Document structure a reviewer expects

- 1. Substance and task**
Product name, manufacturer, CAS / EC number, the specific task in which it is used, frequency and duration.
- 2. Hazard identification**
CLP hazard classification, GHS pictograms, hazard statements (H-codes), reference to safety data sheet section 2.
- 3. Workplace Exposure Limit (EH40)**
Long-term and short-term WELs; how the estimated exposure compares.
- 4. Hierarchy of control**
Eliminate / substitute / engineering / ways of working / PPE — applied in order with justifications for skipping any tier.
- 5. Engineering controls**
LEV, water suppression, on-tool extraction (M-class or H-class), enclosure — specification and TEXT inspection interval.
- 6. PPE and RPE**
Glove material (per EN 374 permeation), eye protection (EN 166), RPE model with assigned protection factor and face-fit record.
- 7. Emergency arrangements**
Spill response, first-aid measures (eye-wash station, skin decontamination), emergency contact.
- 8. Health surveillance (reg 11)**
Surveillance regime (spirometry, skin checks, biological monitoring), provider, recall interval.
- 9. Training and information**
Operatives briefed on the assessment, SDS available, training records dated.

Common reasons reviewers reject this document

- Single COSHH assessment covering 'all site chemicals' — has to be product and task specific.
- Hierarchy of control skipped — straight to PPE without justifying why elimination / substitution / engineering controls were rejected.

- WEL not quoted from EH40, or compared against an estimated exposure level.
- RPE specified without an assigned protection factor or evidence of face-fit testing.
- No health surveillance regime where one is indicated by the hazard (RCS, wood dust, welding fume, isocyanates).
- LEV named but no Thorough Examination and Test (TExT) interval — required at least every 14 months under reg 9.
- Assessment dated more than 12 months ago with no review record — COSHH requires review when work changes or annually as good practice.

UK regulation reference

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 SI 2002/2677

The statutory framework — assessment duty, hierarchy of control, health surveillance.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2677/contents/made>

EH40/2005 Workplace Exposure Limits HSE EH40

The reference document for UK WELs — quoted in every defensible COSHH assessment.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/eh40.htm>

L5 — COSHH Approved Code of Practice HSE L5

Approved Code of Practice with statutory weight — the benchmark reviewers use.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l5.htm>

INDG136 — Working with substances hazardous to health HSE INDG136

Plain-English summary of COSHH duties for employers and contractors.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.htm>

Frequently asked questions

Do I need a COSHH assessment for cement?

Yes. Wet cement is a skin and eye irritant (CLP H315, H319) and a Category 1 skin sensitiser (H317) at chromium-VI levels. Dry cement dust contains respirable crystalline silica (RCS) above the EH40 WEL when cut or mixed dry. Both wet-handling and dust generation tasks require a COSHH assessment.

Is a safety data sheet (SDS) the same as a COSHH assessment?

No. The SDS describes the substance; the COSHH assessment evaluates how *this substance is used in this task by these people on this site*. HSE inspectors routinely reject SDSs presented as COSHH assessments — the assessment has to add the task-specific exposure analysis and the chosen controls.

Do I need health surveillance for silica work?

Yes where the COSHH assessment shows residual exposure to RCS. Standard surveillance is annual lung-function testing (spirometry) by a competent OH provider, with a baseline at first exposure. Failure to implement this is a regulation 11 breach and one of the most common HSE improvement notices in construction.

How often does a COSHH assessment need to be reviewed?

Whenever the work, the substance, the controls or the people change, and in any case 'at suitable intervals' under regulation 6(3). Most UK contractors review annually as a minimum and re-issue per project where the substances or method change.

What's the difference between a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) and a STEL?

The WEL is the long-term (8-hour time-weighted average) limit. The STEL is the short-term (15-minute) limit. Both are published in HSE EH40. A COSHH assessment that controls below the long-term WEL but allows brief excursions above the STEL is still non-compliant.

Need a finished version of this document?

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