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Operational Assurance Group

Safe Systems of Work & Industrial Risk Control Specialists

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COSHH ASSESSMENT GUIDE

**A PRACTICAL STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO ASSESSING
HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES.**



**OPERATIONAL
ASSURANCE GROUP**

SPECIALISTS IN SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK
& INDUSTRIAL RISK CONTROL

COSHH Assessment Guide

A Practical Step-by-Step Approach to Assessing Hazardous Substances

Operational Assurance Group

1. Executive Summary

This guide provides a clear and practical approach to conducting and documenting COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) assessments within industrial environments.

Developed by Operational Assurance Group, it is designed to support organisations in identifying, assessing, and controlling risks associated with hazardous substances in a way that is compliant, practical, and usable in live operations.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Provide a simple step-by-step COSHH assessment process
 - Ensure compliance with UK legislation
 - Support effective risk control
 - Promote consistency in documentation
 - Enable practical implementation on site
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3. Scope

This guidance applies to:

- Construction activities
 - Chemical and petrochemical operations
 - Industrial and manufacturing environments
 - Any activity involving hazardous substances
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4. Our Mission

“To protect people and businesses by delivering practical, audit-ready safe systems of work and risk control solutions that enable confident operational delivery.”

5. Core Principles

Safety as Standard

Protecting people from exposure to hazardous substances is fundamental.

Built for the Real World

Assessments must reflect actual working conditions.

Compliance Without Complication

Meet regulatory requirements without unnecessary complexity.

Operational Alignment

Controls must be workable within site constraints.

Audit-Ready by Design

Documentation must be structured and defensible.

Clear & Direct Communication

Information must be easily understood by those using substances.

6. What is a COSHH Assessment?

A COSHH assessment is the process of evaluating the risks from hazardous substances and identifying suitable control measures to prevent or reduce exposure.

Hazardous substances may include:

- Chemicals and products
- Dusts, fumes, vapours, and mists
- Biological agents

7. Step-by-Step COSHH Assessment Process

Step 1: Identify the Substance

- Name of substance
- Manufacturer/supplier details
- Obtain Safety Data Sheet (SDS)

Step 2: Identify Hazards

- Review hazard classifications (H-statements)
- Identify routes of exposure (inhalation, skin contact, ingestion)
- Consider health effects (acute and chronic)

Step 3: Assess Who Might Be Harmed

- Operators
- Maintenance personnel
- Contractors
- Others (e.g. nearby workers, public)

Step 4: Evaluate the Risk

- Consider quantity, frequency, and duration of use
- Assess existing control measures
- Determine level of exposure

Step 5: Apply the Hierarchy of Control

- Eliminate (remove substance if possible)
- Substitute (use less hazardous alternative)
- Engineering controls (e.g. ventilation, containment)
- Administrative controls (procedures, training)
- PPE (last line of defence)

Step 6: Define Control Measures

- Specify required controls clearly

- Include handling, storage, and disposal requirements
- Define PPE requirements

Step 7: Record the Assessment

- Document findings clearly using Operational Assurance Group Templates – **GB09 – COSHH MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN CHECKLIST**
GB10 – COSHH ASSESSMENT FORM
- Ensure information is accessible
- Link to relevant SSoW or method statements

Step 8: Communicate and Implement

- Brief workforce
- Ensure understanding of controls
- Provide training where required

Step 9: Monitor and Review

- Review periodically
- Update following changes or incidents
- Ensure controls remain effective

8. Key Components of a COSHH Assessment Document

- Substance details
- Hazard information
- Exposure routes
- Persons at risk
- Control measures
- PPE requirements
- Emergency procedures
- First aid measures
- Storage and disposal requirements

- Review date
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9. UK Regulatory Framework and HSE Alignment

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)

- Requires assessment and control of exposure to hazardous substances

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA)

- Duty to protect employees and others

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)

- Requires risk assessment and control measures
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Supporting HSE Guidance

- HSG97: A Step by Step Guide to COSHH Assessment
 - EH40: Workplace Exposure Limits
 - INDG136: COSHH Brief Guide
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10. Common Challenges

- Over-reliance on generic assessments
 - Failure to use SDS effectively
 - Poor communication of controls
 - Overuse of PPE instead of higher-level controls
 - Lack of review and updates
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11. Continuous Improvement

- Regular review of assessments
- Monitoring exposure levels
- Workforce feedback
- Incident and near-miss learning

12. What Sets Operational Assurance Group Apart

Industry-Specific Expertise

Experience across high-risk industrial sectors

Practical Application

Clear, usable documentation

Audit-Ready Outputs

Structured and compliant assessments

Scalable Support

Flexible delivery tailored to client needs

13. Conclusion

Effective COSHH assessments are essential for protecting health and ensuring compliance.

By following a structured, practical approach, organisations can implement controls that are both compliant and operationally effective.

Operational Assurance Group provides the expertise to deliver this outcome.

14. Contact

Operational Assurance Group Specialist Consultancy in Safe Systems of Work & Industrial Risk Control

For further information or support, please get in touch.

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