

S102

COSHH essentials: Harm via skin or eye contact



This information will help employers comply with the **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)**, as amended, to control exposure to chemicals and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet covers protective clothing except gloves (see sheet S101).

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Selecting personal protective equipment (PPE)

Control approach S Supplementary advice

Selection of protective clothing and other PPE

- ✓ You may need expert advice from your PPE supplier or manufacturer, or from a health and safety professional. No materials offer protection against all chemicals. Any chemical will break through protective materials over a period of time. The build up of contamination on PPE makes skin contact more likely.
- ✓ Incorrect selection or misuse can lead to skin disease including dermatitis, burns or serious ill health, and waste your money.

Planning and preparation

- ✓ The PPE chosen must be compatible with all other PPE that is needed, such as respiratory protective equipment (RPE), hard hat or ear muffs.
- ✓ Continued effectiveness depends on proper training in use, cleaning and maintenance, and having good working practices.
- ✓ Ensure that PPE is CE marked as 'complex' and is selected, used and maintained in accordance with BS 7184 - see 'Further information'.
- ✓ Ask your PPE supplier/manufacturer or a health and safety professional how often the PPE needs to be changed. Make sure that the equipment is changed when necessary.

Caution: PPE may reduce mobility, limit communication and increase heat stress.

What needs protecting - what skin is likely to be exposed?

- ✓ The four most common forms of protective clothing are:
 - hands and forearms - chemical protective gloves (See sheet S101);
 - head and body - hooded coveralls or overalls, aprons;
 - face and eyes - face visors, goggles; and
 - feet, lower legs - protective footwear.



Coveralls

- ✓ Tell workers to wear clothing under coveralls. Two layers of clothing reduce the amount that gets through to the skin. Air impermeable coveralls can give high levels of chemical protection, but can draw dusts and mists inside the clothing at neck, arm and ankle.
- ✓ Use, clean and maintain coveralls in accordance with the manufacturer's Instruction. Throw away disposable coveralls, as hazardous waste, at the end of the shift or particular job.
- ✓ Use a contract laundry or a suitable equivalent to wash protective clothing.

Eye and face protection

- ✓ Eye and face protection may be needed for protection against impact, dusts, mist, gases and vapours as well as chemical splashes. Seek expert advice from your PPE supplier or manufacturer, or a health and safety professional.
- ✓ If workers wear a full-face respirator that also provides eye and face protection, ensure that this is included in the manufacturing standard.

Protective footwear

- ✓ You may need to provide protective footwear against safety hazards, eg static, crushing, heat, and spike-penetration. There are at present no standards for chemical protective footwear.
- ✓ Some chemicals penetrate leather very easily. Tell your supplier what chemicals you are using. Wear wellington boots if chemicals or products could come into contact with the lower leg or drop into shoes.

Training and supervision

- ✓ Train workers how to keep exposures low, how to use the PPE, and what to do if something goes wrong.
- ✓ Provide facilities to keep clean clothing and dirty work clothing apart. Check that workers use, clean and store their PPE properly.

Further information

- BS 7184:2001 *Selection, use and maintenance of chemical protective clothing*. British Standards Institution ISBN 0 580 38614 7

Useful links

- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at www.bohs.org for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- You can search for British Standards at www.bsi-global.com.

Employee checklist

- Check the equipment for damage both before and after use.
- Clean reusable PPE after every use in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Never wash chemically contaminated PPE at home.
- Use disposable PPE once only. Throw it away after use.
- Change reusable overalls regularly – at least once a week.
- Store PPE in a clean cupboard or locker.
- Avoid contaminating the skin when taking off protective clothing and footwear.
- Try not to spread chemical contamination around.
- Never use compressed air to remove dust from PPE.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.