



Health and Safety Bulletin

To: Heads of Department/Section, Executive Deans, HSLOs and DHSOs, Faculty Managers.

Hazardous Substances Safety

For action: for any staff member with responsibilities for hazardous substances

Hazardous substances are handled and stored across the University in a range of departments. Examples include cleaning agents, paints, varnishes, oils, solvents, acids, dusts, gases and fumes. Some substances may be generated as part of a process, such as carpentry or welding. Many substances can cause short term and/or long-term health effects and can cause fire and environmental hazards. All departments that handle hazardous substances must ensure that the risks to health of staff, students and others are correctly managed so that exposure is prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled. The key legislation for hazardous substances is the *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations* and the *Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR)*.

The web page for [hazardous substances safety](#) has been updated and new [Hazardous Substance Safety Policy](#) has been published, which clearly sets out the expectation for safe management of hazardous substances at the University. This Policy covers academic and non-academic areas. It does not cover legionella, asbestos or work with biological agents, which have separate policies.

Responsibilities

Heads of Department/Section have overall responsibility for ensuring that their Department/Section complies with the Policy. Heads of Department/Section may delegate delivery of specific aspects of the management system to others in the Department/Section, which must be clearly defined in departmental procedures.

25 July 2023

For Action

What you need to do now

If you have responsibilities for hazardous substances in your department, please read the Hazardous Substance Safety Policy and check that the requirements are correctly implemented in your department/section. A [Quick Guide](#) is also available to help you. Key requirements include:

- **Inventory.** Ensure there is an up to date [inventory](#) of the hazardous substances in your department or area. Keep quantities to the maximum required and make sure that any redundant substances are safely disposed of, using the correct hazardous waste stream.
- **Safety Data Sheets (SDS).** This is issued by the supplier of the substance and provides important health and safety information. Check that you have a current SDS for every hazardous substance used or stored by your department, and that this is readily available for users.
- **Risk Assessments.** Ensure that you have up to date COSHH assessment(s) for the hazardous substances in your area. A [COSHH template](#) is available for you to use, or you can use an equivalent template of your own. If you store significant quantities of flammable substances, please contact the WHSW team for further advice on risk assessment.
- **Local procedures.** Departments that handle significant amounts of hazardous substances must have documented procedures which set out the arrangements for controlling the risk, including designated responsibilities, procurement, inventory management, monitoring of control measures, training/supervision, emergency procedures, labelling, storage, transport and waste disposal.
- **Storage.** Check that your hazardous substances are safely stored when not in use. Ensure that there is correct containment for the substances, adequate bunding to contain spills, correct labelling and appropriate segregation for chemicals that may react together.
- **Training.** All users of hazardous substances must be trained in their safe use. Staff who are required to complete COSHH risk assessments should attend Hazardous Substance Safety (COSHH) training provided by the University, or equivalent training. Dates for the 2023-2024 academic year will shortly be available to book on iTrent.

For further information or advice, please contact the WHSW team at safety@essex.ac.uk.