

# **FERRYHILL TOWN COUNCIL**



## **POLICY**

### **CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (C.OS.H.H.)**

## **Statement of Policy**

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 (COSHH) build upon the general duties contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. These regulations impose duties aimed at preventing ill health caused by exposure to hazardous substances used at work.

The Council will strive to comply with the COSHH regulations and will take steps to ensure that exposure of employees, and others who may be affected, is prevented or adequately controlled in accordance with the principles given in the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and published guidance.

Risks will be assessed and control of risks to health from hazardous substances will be in accordance with the principles given in the ACOP.

Where possible substitution of a hazardous substance by a less hazardous one will be used. Engineering controls will be used in preference to personal protective equipment. Provision of information and where appropriate training is also recognised as being important.

The successful implementation of this policy requires the cooperation of all staff and in particular those who work with hazardous substances and those who have line management responsibility for those who do such work.

Appendix '1' DEFINITION OF A SUBSTANCE HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH is attached for further reference.

## **Organisation and Arrangements**

### **The Town Clerk will:-**

- For areas for storing hazardous substances, ensure that an inventory of such substances is maintained;
- ensure that those responsible for ordering substances hazardous to health obtain material safety data sheets from the supplier. Suppliers have a legal obligation to supply these sheets under the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 1994;
- ensure that the material safety data sheets mentioned above are kept and made available to those who work with the substances;
- ensure that COSHH assessments are made for areas under their control where hazardous substances are used. Such assessments should be made before the first use of any substance;
- ensure that COSHH assessments are reviewed at regular intervals or when they become invalid;

- ensure that exposure of persons who may be affected by hazardous substances used in areas under their control is prevented or adequately controlled;
- ensure that control measures provided in their areas are adequately maintained and properly used.
- make arrangements for staff under their control to receive adequate information and, where appropriate training, on the risks to health to which they may be exposed from contact with hazardous substances and the precautions which should be taken;
- make arrangements for the issue to staff of personal protective equipment where it is not reasonably practicable to achieve adequate control by other means;
- where respiratory protective equipment is provided (other than disposable face masks), make arrangements for it to be inspected by a competent person at intervals of not more than 3 months. Records of inspections to be kept.

### **Health and Safety Support Officer**

The Health and Safety Support Officer will :-

- work with staff and others, as appropriate to ensure that the Council fulfils its legal obligation to conduct and record COSHH assessments and to meet the other requirements of COSHH;
- keep a central record of COSHH assessments;
- advise staff on appropriate control measures to prevent or adequately control exposure;
- develop and deliver training in safe use of hazardous substances.

### **All employees**

- working with substances hazardous to health will use the control measures provided.
- will report any defect in these measures.

## **DEFINITION OF A SUBSTANCE HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH**

A wide range of substances can be hazardous to health and these may be found in a wide variety of work environments. Chemical laboratories are obvious places to find substances hazardous to health, but many commonly encountered substances are also hazardous e.g. wood dust (particularly hardwoods), solvents used for cleaning, strong cleaning materials such as bleach or oven cleaner, some types of paint, solvent based glues, even correction fluid and the thinner used with it.

Exposure to substances hazardous to health may have short term effects (known as acute) e.g. strong acid in contact with the skin can rapidly give rise to a chemical burn. Long term exposure (known as chronic) can also have health effects e.g. the liver damage which sometimes results from ingestion of significant quantities of ethanol over a period of years.

In order to damage health, substances must first enter the body. This may be through the lungs (inhalation), through the gastro-intestinal tract (ingestion) or by contact with the skin. Inhalation gives an effective and rapid means of getting gases, vapours and fine dusts into the body as any glue sniffer or tobacco smoker will know.

A formal definition of a substance hazardous to health is given in regulation 2 of the COSHH Regulations and a simplified version of this is given below :-

“Substance hazardous to health” means any substance which is :-

- classified as being very toxic, toxic, harmful, corrosive or irritant. For commercially available substances and preparations this information is given on the label;
- a substance for which the Health and Safety Commission has approved an occupational exposure standard. These are in HSE publication “EH40”;
- a biological agent;
- dust of any kind, when present at a substantial concentration in air;
- any other substance not mentioned above, but which creates a similar hazard to any substance covered by any of the above points.

“Biological agent” is defined as :-

- any micro-organism, cell culture, or human endoparasite, including any which have been genetically modified, which may cause any infection, allergy, toxicity or otherwise create a risk to human health.