



# COSHH



**COSHH** stands for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. It's a legal framework under the COSHH Regulations 2002 (as amended) that aims to protect workers and others from health risks caused by hazardous substances.

## Why COSHH is important at Network Rail

**Hazardous substances are common in rail operations. These include:**

- Fuels, oils, solvents, adhesives
- Dusts and fumes (e.g. ballast dust, welding fumes, diesel fumes)
- Paints and biological agents (e.g. sewage, bird droppings).

**Exposure can lead to:**

- Respiratory issues
- Eye damage
- Skin irritation
- Poisoning.



## Legal duties

**Employers** must assess and control risks.

**Employees** must use controls provided and report any problems.

Specific responsibilities are defined under:

- COSHH Regulations 2002
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Network Rail's Safety Management System.



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# What to do



## How Network Rail manages COSHH risks

### Product Acceptance

- Products must have Product Acceptance for use on NRMI
- Available through PADSnet
- Fully completed COSHH Assessment using Sypol System.

### COSHH Assessments

- Required before using or storing hazardous substances
- Must identify:
  - Substance name and hazards
  - Route of exposure (inhalation, skin, ingestion)
  - Who may be exposed and how often
  - Controls in place and needed.
- Use the Network Rail COSHH Assessment (available via MyConnect – Sypol).

### Safe storage and handling

- Store chemicals in suitable, labelled containers
- Keep incompatible substances apart (e.g. acids and alkalis)
- Use secure, ventilated chemical storage cupboards
- Keep Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available and accessible.

### Control measures

- Engineering controls (local exhaust ventilation)
- Safe work procedures
- Staff training and supervision
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Always suitable for the products being used (found in the Sypol assessment, gloves, goggles, respiratory protection).



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# What to do



## Signage and labelling

- Use COSHH signs in chemical stores and near risk areas
- Ensure all containers are clearly labelled.

## Using hazardous substances safely

- Ensure that there is a completed My Sytol COSHH Assessment in place prior to using products on NRMI
- Some activities, such as working with Silica (Ballast), Welding Fumes or Diesel Fumes, will have separate COSHH Assessments and Controls, which should be briefed and understood
- Only when briefed, trained if required, and aware of hazards, should personnel handle chemicals
- Follow any specific instructions carefully – dilution, contact time, disposal.

## PPE – the last line of defence

- Wear PPE based on COSHH assessment information
- Check PPE is fit for purpose (condition) before use
- Clean or dispose of PPE correctly
- Report any faults or PPE failures.

## First Aid and Emergencies

- Be familiar with emergency procedures for each substance
- Eye contact: Rinse immediately with water
- Skin contact: Wash with soap and water
- Inhalation: Move to fresh air
- Ingestion: Do not induce vomiting – seek medical help
- Spill kits and eyewash stations must be available and accessible.



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# What to do



## Monitoring and health surveillance

- Exposure monitoring may be needed for substances like silica or welding fumes
- Occupational Health may carry out health surveillance where required.

## Reporting issues

- Report any spills, leaks, symptoms or unsafe practices to your line manager or safety rep
- Use Close Call reporting via Network Rail's safety systems.

## Questions to consider

1

**Have all hazardous substances I might encounter during my daily tasks on or near the railway been identified?**

Think about substances like oils, fuels, solvents, dusts, fumes or trackside herbicides.

2

**Has the content of the relevant COSHH Assessments and Safety Data Sheets that I might use been briefed to me?**

Have I understood these briefings, or do I need to understand more, and should I ask questions?

3

**Am I consistently using the correct PPE and following the safe handling procedures for hazardous substances?**

Consider whether shortcuts or familiarity have caused lapses in wearing the correct PPE or safe working habits.

4

**Have I reported any incidents, near misses or health symptoms that could be related to exposure to hazardous substances?**

Think about whether you've raised concerns, if you haven't, make arrangements to do so.

5

**What could I do differently to improve COSHH compliance and keep myself and my team safer when working with or around hazardous substances?**

Consider team training requirements, communication and housekeeping improvements.



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# Resources



## Resources and support



For more information, visit Network Rail's Safety Central, or speak to your route or functional Health and Safety team.



COSHH assessments and SDS can be found on the company's chemical database system (Sypol, available through MyConnect). Mobile devices: use Info Centre net.



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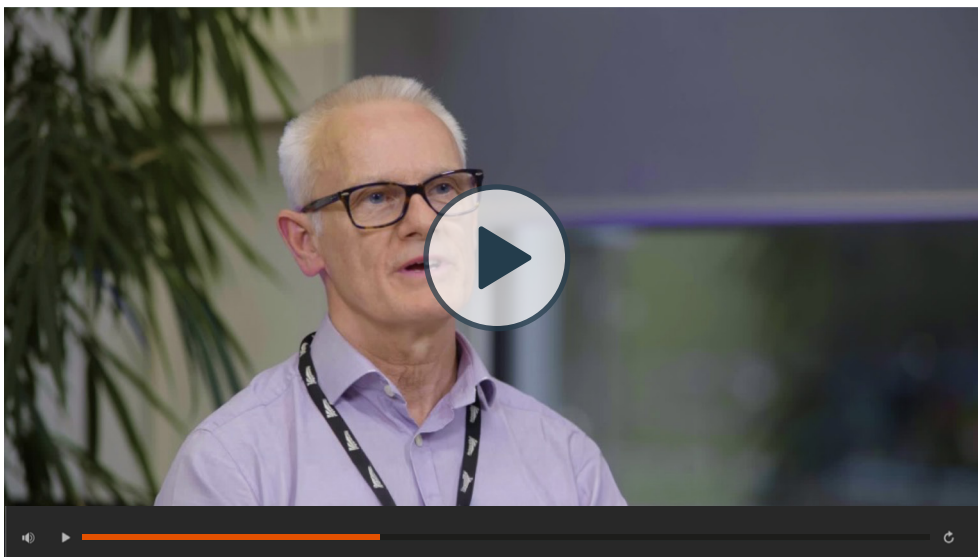
# Video



## COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health)

In this video, John Smith (Technical Capability Manager, Corporate Safety Team) outlines the importance of adhering to COSHH regulations, emphasising risk assessments, engineering controls, safe work procedures, proper PPE use, staff training and health surveillance to prevent both immediate and long-term health issues.

Select the play button below for an overview.



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