

Toolbox Talk

33. Hazardous Substances



What?

Thousands of substances are used every day at work some of which can be hazardous to health. Normal routes of entry to the body are ingestion, inhalation, injection and absorption through the skin. Depending on the substance, and degree of exposure the effect can be mild at one end of the scale to very serious at the other end such as cancer. The effects can also be acute (short term) or chronic (long term). The manufacturers / suppliers of hazardous substances have a legal obligation to provide information about the substance, it's correct use and the measures which must be applied to control the risk.



Why?

Every year thousands of workers are made ill when using hazardous substances resulting in respiratory problems, skin conditions and more long term diseases. The effects can be temporary or in more severe cases permanent. It is important to understand the risks by reading the instructions for use and the safety data sheet and then implementing the recommended precautions.



Do



- ✓ Use PPE or RPE where recommended
- ✓ Read the manufacturers instructions and implement the stipulated precautions
- ✓ Use in an adequately ventilated area
- ✓ Make sure lids, bungs or caps are replaced immediately after use
- ✓ Wash hands after use
- ✓ Keep in correct storage area
- ✓ Report any spillage or leaks immediately
- ✓ Use local exhaust ventilation where provided
- ✓ Dispose of substances correctly
- ✓ Follow advice in safety data sheets and risk assessments

Don't



- ✗ Forget to use suitable PPE
- ✗ Sniff containers
- ✗ Put harmful products in unmarked containers
- ✗ Store incompatible substances together
- ✗ Mix substances together unless it is safe to do so
- ✗ Put harmful substances down drains, sinks, etc
- ✗ Burn old containers
- ✗ Smoke or eat while using hazardous substances – wash your hands before doing so



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