

# ConstructionSkills Tool Box Talk

## No. 11 COSHH

- Prepare** Location? Distractions? Preparation? Talk aids?  
**Reason** Hazardous substances can be used in, or created by, construction processes.  
**Why** Ignore a hazardous substance today and you may wish you hadn't by tomorrow. If you are not sure, **ask**.  
**Outline** This talk will cover risk assessment, hazards, control measures and safe use of substances.

### Risk assessment

1. A competent person must carry out a risk assessment to decide whether:
  - exposure to a substance can be avoided
  - alternative work methods can reduce exposure
  - a less hazardous substance can be used.
2. Any substance with a hazard warning label has the potential to cause harm – the risk must be assessed before it is used.

**Q: Before using a substance, what should you consider?**

### Hazards

1. How you could be affected by a hazardous substance through:
  - ingestion – eating contaminated food
  - inhalation – breathing harmful dust or fumes
  - absorption – chemicals entering through cuts, etc.
2. Examples of hazardous substances on construction sites:

• contaminated ground	• concrete admixtures	• cement
• solvent fumes	• hardwood dust	• resins
• epoxy-based paints	• welding fumes	• asbestos.
3. Don't mix chemicals or substances unless it is a safe and authorised process.

**Q: Name the three ways a substance can enter your body.**

### Control measures

1. When using hazardous substances, wear the correct PPE.
2. Know how to look after and use PPE correctly.
3. Know where washing and first-aid facilities are on site.
4. Ensure hazardous substances are put back into a secure location after – do not leave on site.
5. Don't store hazardous substances above head height.

**Q: Where should substances be put at the end of a shift?**

### Safe use of substances

1. Make sure you are trained to use hazardous substances.
2. Read and comply with the COSHH assessment and the instructions on the product label.
3. Don't eat, drink or smoke when handling substances.
4. Don't expose workers to fumes, dust, gas or other dangers from hazardous substances due to your work.
5. Always wash at the end of each shift and before eating.

**Q: Where can you obtain information about the hazardous substance you are using?**

Do you have any questions for me?

### Questions for you

**Q: What can you wear to protect against substances?**

**Q: Name five hazardous substances you may find on site.**

**REMEMBER** KNOW WHAT PPE TO WEAR TO PROTECT AGAINST THE HAZARD.

### Further information

- Construction Site Safety (GE 700) – Module B3
- Site Safety Simplified (GE 706) – Chapters 14 and 15
- HSE – HSG97 A step by step guide to COSHH assessment
- HSE – HSG193 COSHH essentials

