

minimise the risks to health. This is approached using the hierarchy of firstly **elimination**, secondly **isolation**, and finally **minimisation** (as required under the HSE Act).

Substitution of a hazardous substance for one less hazardous may be an option. Other measures include **engineering controls**, such as total enclosure of a process and provision of effective local exhaust ventilation.

Administrative controls — such as rotation of staff working with a hazardous process and limiting work hours in such areas — should only be used alongside other suitable measures.

The use of **personal protective equipment** (PPE) should be regarded as an interim measure only whilst other measures are under consideration, or where the other measures do not provide full protection. PPE may be a practicable option for tasks such as maintenance, where exposure to hazardous substances is infrequent and for a relatively short time only.

You need to monitor the workplace and/or employees' health

The MOSHH Code requires employers to at least consider two types of monitoring:

Measuring employees' **exposure** to a hazardous substance; and

Checking their **health** in relation to the exposure.

Both workplace exposure monitoring and health surveillance may be necessary to ensure that exposure to hazardous substances is being adequately controlled.

These are specialist activities and they would usually be carried out by a person with relevant expertise in occupational health.



Training and supervision must be adequate

You have a duty under section 13 of the HSE Act to provide training and supervision for employees that may be exposed to hazardous substances.

Before any employee begins working with hazardous substances, training must be given on the steps required to work safely with the substances, and on the use and maintenance of any protective clothing or equipment required.

As an employer you must also ensure that employees are supervised until they are familiar with processes involving hazardous substances.

Further information

You can get further information and advice from your nearest office of the Occupational Safety and Health Service. Refer to the *Blue Pages* at the front of your telephone directory for the address.

This pamphlet summarises the *Approved Code of Practice for the Management of Substances Hazardous to Health in the Place of Work*, available from OSH.

Other publications that support the code include:

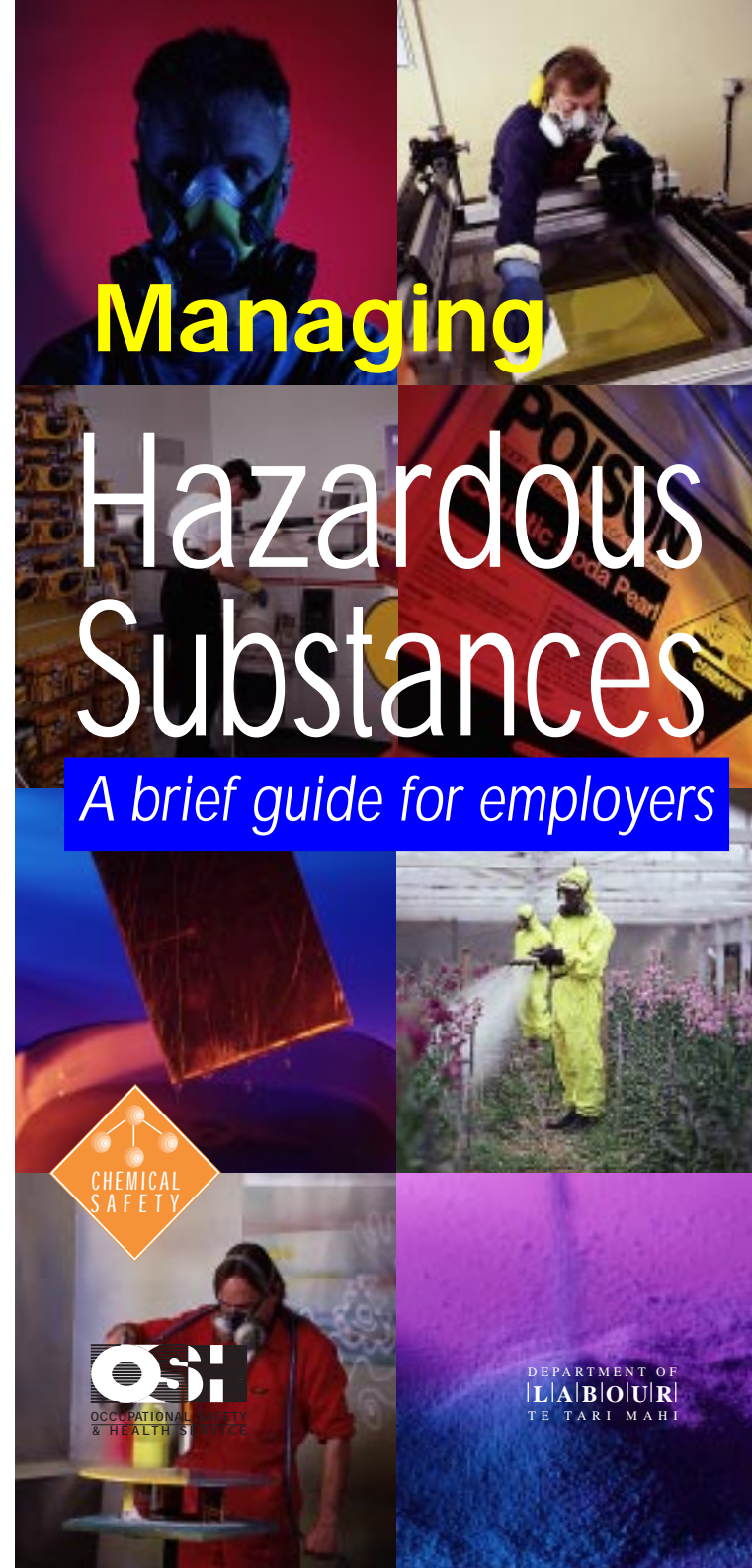
◆ *A Practical Guide and Workbook for Completing a MOSHH Assessment in Your Workplace*;

◆ *Guidelines for Workplace Health Surveillance*;

◆ *Guidelines for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets in New Zealand*; and

◆ *Working Safely with Hazardous Substances — advice for employees*.

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Managing

Hazardous Substances

A brief guide for employers

CHEMICAL SAFETY

OSH
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF
LABOUR
TE TARI MAHI



This pamphlet is for you if you employ people who work with or near **chemicals** or other **hazardous substances**. It briefly sets out your responsibilities for managing hazardous substances under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 — the “HSE Act”.

It summarises the approach set out in the *Approved Code of Practice for the Management of Substances Hazardous to Health in the Place of Work* — the “MOSHH” code. More detail is provided in the code itself and its supporting documents.

What is a substance hazardous to health?

A **substance hazardous to health** is any substance, or product containing a substance, to be used or produced in a workplace that is known or suspected to cause harm to health.

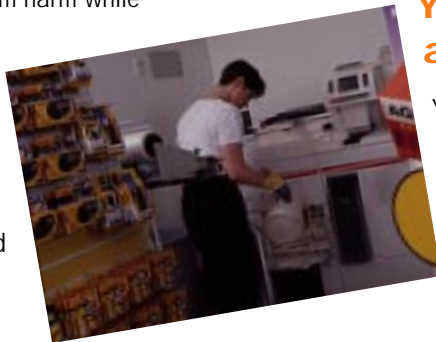
You need to provide information to employees

As an employer you have a duty under section 12 of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 to provide information on the handling or use of hazardous substances. Employees need to know:

- What they are dealing with and any risks arising from it;

- How to protect themselves from harm while using it; and

- Whether or not they need **regular medical checks** if they work with certain substances and are at risk of coming in contact with them (exposure). Information needs to be easily understood by the employees or others concerned.



Material safety data sheets (MSDSs) provided by the supplier will usually be the main source of information but it is important to ensure that employees are given relevant details in a form they will understand.

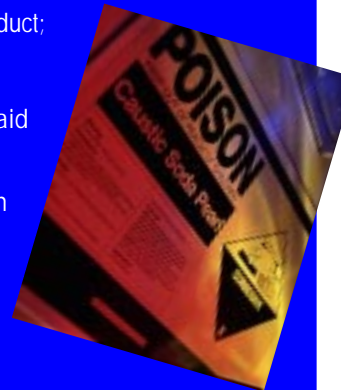
Product safety cards, containing the essential details for the safe handling of hazardous substances, can be used effectively at the place where the substances are being used. Employees should, however, still have ready access to the full MSDS sheets.

All containers of hazardous substances should be clearly **labelled** to identify the contents. Proper identification is the starting point for management of substances hazardous to health.

Remember: MSDSs are important

Material safety data sheets are a key document in the handling of hazardous substances. They follow a recognised format to set out:

- The ingredients of the product;
- The health effects of the hazardous substance and first-aid instructions;
- Precautions to follow when you use the product; and
- Safe handling and storage information.



You need to identify and assess hazards

You have a duty under section 7 of the HSE Act to have in place effective methods to **systematically** identify and assess hazards.

A thorough assessment of the hazards created by the storage, handling, use and

disposal of hazardous substances will enable adequate control measures to be implemented.

The emphasis should be on determining the magnitude of the risks to employees and then ensuring that all practicable steps are taken to minimise those risks.

The **assessment** should include, but not necessarily be limited to the following:

- Identification of substances hazardous to health;
- Obtaining and reviewing information on the substances;
- Determining the exposure of employees to the substances;
- Estimating risks to health of employees; and
- Evaluation of the assessment.

If yours is a smaller business, you or another person with knowledge and experience of the substances and processes may be able to carry out most of the assessment. Some outside expertise may be required to ensure that the conclusions of the assessment are reasonable.

A larger business may have sufficient technical expertise in-house to carry out its assessments in full.

The details of assessment are fully described in the MOSHH code, and the workbook which accompanies it. Assessments should be revised at least every two years.

You need to put controls in place

The assessment may or may not indicate that the controls in place are not adequate to protect the health and safety of employees. All practicable steps should be taken to prevent exposure, and where this cannot be achieved, exposure should be controlled to

