

P42

COSHH essentials for printers



This information is intended to help employers in the printing industry comply with the requirements of the Control of Substances

Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to chemicals and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice for mixing and transferring isocyanate-based products. Enclose the mixing process.

It is important to follow all the points or use equally effective measures.

Isocyanate-based adhesives can cause dermatitis and asthma. Consider using isocyanate-free products.

Prevent exposure to substances that can cause occupational asthma. If that isn't reasonably practicable, control exposure to stop asthma developing.

If a worker develops occupational asthma, avoid further exposure.

Main points

- Avoid skin contact and inhaling isocyanate-based products - these can cause dermatitis and asthma.
- Carry out health surveillance for asthma and dermatitis.

Mixing and transferring isocyanate-based adhesives

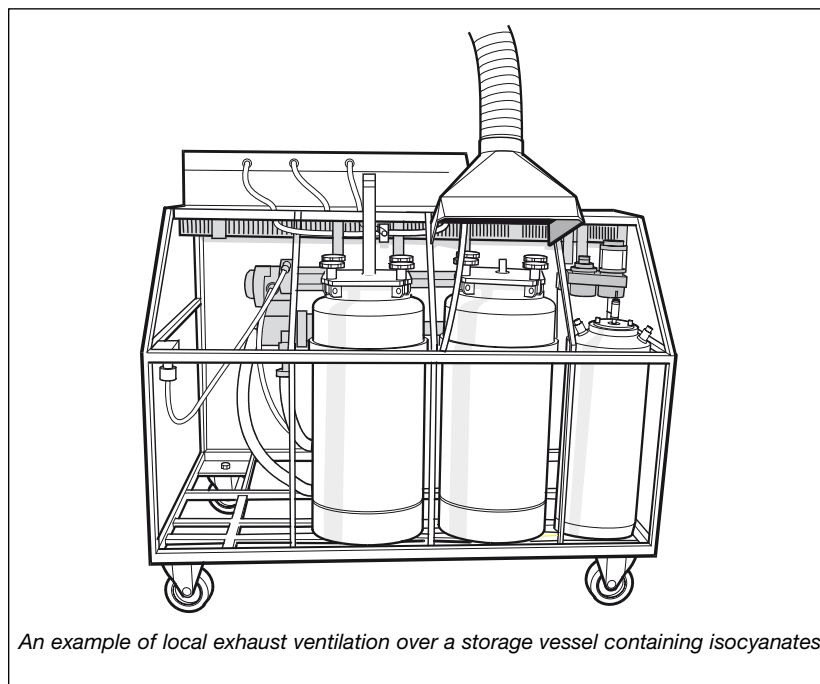
Laminating

Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow staff under health surveillance to work with isocyanates.
- ✓ Provide good facilities for washing, skin care, and for taking refreshments.

Equipment

- ✓ Can you avoid mixing by pumping the chemicals to the applicator head?
- ✓ Provide a good standard of general ventilation. Use powered wall- or window-mounted fans to supply fresh air - five to ten air changes per hour, with a through draught.
- ✓ Provide splash-resistant gloves.
- ✓ Fully enclosed mixers are preferred. Otherwise, charging and mixing needs extraction.
- ✓ Keep containers securely closed for transport to the laminator.
- ✓ Wipe up dribbles and spills immediately. Decontaminate the wipes - see 'Cleaning and housekeeping'.
- ✓ Stand containers in shallow trays to contain spills.



An example of local exhaust ventilation over a storage vessel containing isocyanates

Special care

- ✓ Avoid products containing HDI, IPDI or TDI - check the safety data sheet. If you do need to use an isocyanate-based product, choose one containing MDI, which is less volatile.

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Follow the instructions in the maintenance manual - keep equipment in effective and efficient working order.
- ✓ Noisy or vibrating fans indicate a problem. Do repairs as necessary.
- ✓ If the machine extraction stops, or is faulty, get it repaired straightaway.
- ✓ Don't alter, add or remove extraction without specialist advice.
- ✓ Check transfer hoses and connectors regularly for leaks.
- ✓ At least once a week, check that the extraction system and gauges work properly.
- ✓ You need to know the manufacturer's performance specifications to know if extraction is working properly.
- ✓ If this information isn't available, hire a competent ventilation engineer to determine the performance needed for effective control.
- ✓ The engineer's report must show the target extraction rates.
- ✓ Keep this information in your testing logbook.
- ✓ Get a competent ventilation engineer to examine the extraction thoroughly and test its performance at least once every 14 months - see HSE publication HSG54.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.
- ✓ Visually check compressed airlines for damage before use.
- ✓ Biological monitoring for isocyanates may be required - see sheet P47.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Provide storage for PPE to prevent damage or contamination when not in use.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

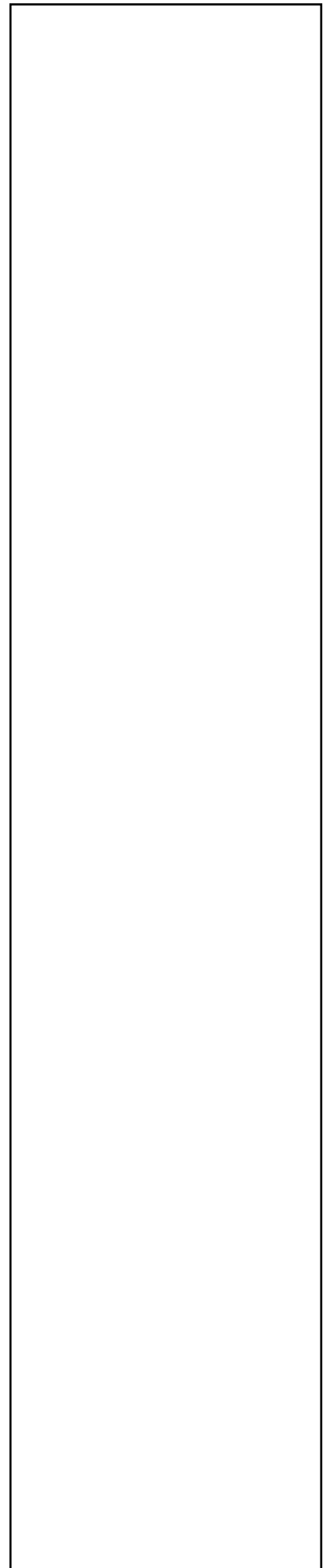
- ✓ RPE should not be needed for routine use.
- ✓ Air-fed RPE may be needed for use in emergencies, for example cleaning up spillages. This needs a supply of clean compressed air.
- ✓ Provide an LDM2 air-fed half-mask for clearing up spills, blockages, maintenance, etc. See sheet P49.
- ✓ Ensure users examine their RPE thoroughly and test that it works properly every time they use it.

Gloves

- ✓ Use splash-resistant gloves. Single-use nitrile gloves 0.2 mm thick are acceptable.
- ✓ Ensure that workers wear them.
- ✓ Tell workers to dispose of single-use gloves every time they take them off.

Other equipment

- ✓ Wear cotton overalls to minimise clothing contamination.
- ✓ Change contaminated overalls immediately and ensure they are laundered before reuse.



Asthma management

- ✓ There is a chance of asthma developing, even with good controls in place.
- ✓ Health surveillance for occupational asthma is required. See sheet P46.
- ✓ Seek advice from an occupational health professional.
- ✓ Start surveillance for new workers within six weeks of their starting work. Then check as advised by your health professional.

Skin management

- ✓ Skin contact with isocyanates may cause dermatitis.

Skin care

- ✓ Keep hands clean and in a good condition.
- ✓ Using pre-work creams helps make removing chemicals easier. However, pre-work creams should not be seen as a substitute for gloves.
- ✓ If you need to use hand cleansers to remove adhesives, ensure that the cleanser is rinsed off afterwards.
- ✓ Provide after-work creams (moisturisers) to replace skin oils.
- ✓ Never allow solvents to be used for cleaning skin.

Skin surveillance/checks

- ✓ Health surveillance for dermatitis is required. See sheet P45.
- ✓ Seek advice from an occupational health professional in setting up a health surveillance programme.
- ✓ Start surveillance for new workers within six weeks of their starting work. Then check at monthly intervals or as advised by your health professional.

Cleaning and housekeeping

- ✓ Keep the work area tidy, clean and free of combustible materials.
- ✓ Clean the workroom at least once a week.
- ✓ Store containers in a safe place, securely closed.
- ✓ Clean up spills immediately with absorbent granules or cloths. Use new nitrile gloves 0.4 mm thick. Throw away gloves once used.

Decontamination

- ✓ Store contaminated cloths, wipes and gloves in fire-resisting, closed metal containers. Decontaminate promptly.
- ✓ Decontaminate empty containers.
- ✓ Dispose of waste solvent and decontaminated wipes, containers, etc as hazardous waste.
- ✓ Use a contract laundry or a suitable equivalent to wash work clothing. Don't do this at home.
- ✓ Ask your supplier, or read the safety data sheet.
- ✓ You can use a solution of sodium carbonate (washing soda) in water, 50 g per litre. Mix with the contaminated waste and leave it to stand for a few days.



Training and supervision

- ✓ Working in the right way is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers - see details in sheet P0.
- ✓ Warn workers about the dermatitis and asthma risks from isocyanates.

Environmental guidelines

Releases into the air may be regulated within the Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) framework. Your local authority or the Environment Agency will advise you if PPC applies to your company, and about air cleaning and discharging emissions. In Scotland, consult the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). For more information, see www.environment-agency.gov.uk/netregs/sectors.

Further information

- *The printer's guide to health and safety (Second edition)* HSE Books 2002 ISBN 0 7176 2267 3
- *Skin problems in the printing industry* Leaflet IACL101(rev1) HSE Books 2002 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 2322 X)
- *General ventilation in the workplace: Guidance for employers* HSG202 HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1793 9
- *Maintenance, examination and testing of local exhaust ventilation HSG54 (Second edition)* HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1485 9
- *Preventing asthma at work: How to control respiratory sensitisers* L55 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0661 9
- *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* HSG53 (Third edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 0 7176 2904 X

Useful links

Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at www.bohs.org for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.

Look in Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for occupational physicians (doctors and nurses). Also see www.nhsplus.nhs.uk.

Contact the Health and Safety Laboratory at hslinfo@hsl.gov.uk for help on biological monitoring for isocyanates.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

Employee checklist

- Is the workroom ventilation switched on and working properly?
- Is the machine extraction switched on and working properly?
- Look for signs of wear and damage.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor or safety/employee representative. Don't just carry on working.
- Wear your protective equipment as directed.
- Throw away single-use gloves every time you take them off.
- Don't use damaged gloves.
- Never use solvents to clean your hands - only use proprietary skin cleansers.
- Use skin creams provided as instructed.
- Check your skin regularly for dryness or soreness - tell your supervisor if these appear.
- Co-operate with health surveillance for asthma and dermatitis.
- Check your RPE works properly every time you use it.
- Wash your hands before eating and drinking and before you leave work.
- Don't smoke in the work area.