



STOP DEADLY EXPOSURES @WORK TODAY!

To stop preventable work-related deaths, remove exposure to hazardous substances @work

Worldwide: 160 million occupational diseases every year: Over 1 million deaths

Evidence shows good health and safety laws, strictly enforced with regular inspections, and appropriate penalties, plus trade union organisation with elected safety reps make work safer and healthier. This includes managing hazardous substances to prevent exposure. Every year in the UK hundreds of thousands of workers are made ill, and tens of thousands are killed by hazardous substances. Every one of these illnesses and deaths was preventable. The Hazards Campaign estimates 18,000 deaths from work cancer, 20,000 deaths from heart disease, some of which are caused by dust and fumes, and 12,000 deaths from lung, neurological and other illnesses caused by chemicals and dusts.

Hazardous substances: organic and inorganic chemicals; elements like lead and arsenic; minerals such as asbestos and silica; compounds and mixtures such as pesticides or solvents; metals; plus dusts and biological agents viruses, bacteria, fungi and prions; nanomaterials, second hand tobacco smoke. Workplace exposure to hazardous substances causes illnesses such as cancer of many organs, lung and heart disease, asthma, reproductive, neurological, endocrine, reproductive and autoimmune illnesses, dermatitis and other skin diseases.

Asbestos causes mesothelioma, lung cancer, asbestosis, and pleural thickening

Flour & tea dust, moulds, microbes, isocyanates cause asthma, respiratory irritation and sensitivity

Cleaning chemicals cause skin, eye and respiratory irritation, hormone disrupting disorders and cancers

Diesel fumes, silica, wood dust, paint, hair dyes cause cancers

Endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) found in plastics, pesticides, cleaning products, food & many other products cause endocrine system problems- diabetes, obesity- reproductive system cancers

Organic Solvents cause skin, eye, respiratory and neurological illness

Biological agents, body fluids cause Ebola, HIV, TB, Weil's disease, Gastro-intestinal illnesses

Which workers are at risk of exposure to hazardous substances? Almost all may be. Even in supposedly safe workplaces, like offices, don't forget cleaning materials, printer and photocopier fumes and asbestos in the fabric of building. Many workers are exposed to a toxic cocktail of hazardous substances e.g. building workers to asbestos, wood, silica dust, paint and diesel fumes. Even very low levels of exposure, especially of asbestos, endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and mixed chemicals, can significantly harm our short or long term health. Sperm, eggs & developing foetus can be harmed by very small work exposures.

250,000 substances on market but only 181 tested by independent organisations for health & environmental effects.

4,000 substances are proven carcinogens, mutagens or toxic for reproduction and **5,000** more are suspected to be

3,600 are respiratory sensitizers and more than **11,000** are skin sensitizers.

Asbestos is found in almost 90% of our schools, in public & residential buildings built or refurbished before year 2000. 150 teachers have died of mesothelioma in the last decade; plus other school staff, and possibly up to 300 ex-pupils a year may die from past asbestos exposure in schools. Around 20 Tradesmen die each week due to past asbestos exposure.

Passive Smoking is a cancer risk for prison guards.

Hormone disrupting chemicals (EDCs) cost Europe over £110 billion a year and need to be regulated to prevent hormone related cancers.

Take action together through your trade union

Exposed to hazardous substances at work? There should be a law against it, and there is!

The **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations** say employers must prevent exposure of workers to substances that harm their health at work. There are also specific Regulations covering exposure to Asbestos and Lead.

Are you exposed at work? Use the COSHH. Your employer must use the COSHH Control Hierarchy:

- **Identify** all substances used at, or arising in the course of, work— dust, fumes, combustion & by-products
- **Assess** their risks, and if they are hazardous to health - in short or long term as ,carcinogenic, irritant, corrosive, asthmagens, mutagen, reproductive toxin, **then employers must:**
 - **Eliminate or substitute** with safer substances. See <http://www.subsport.eu/> - **If this is not possible, then**
 - **Use engineering & other controls** to prevent exposure of all workers— isolate, enclose, local exhaust ventilation - and
 - **Only as a last resort** use Personal Protective Equipment
- **Eliminate or control the most hazardous substances first** —carcinogens (cause cancer), mutagens (cause changes to genes) and reproductive toxins. www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/

As we learn more about substances, the more we find that even small exposures of previously thought safe substances can be harmful, especially for children and the developing foetus. So it makes sense to reduce our exposure to all substances as far as we can. For example, identify and eliminate all cleaning chemicals that have hazard warning signs and use safer substitutes. Work with your union and employer on a **Toxics Reduction** programme.

In the EU 100,000 people die from work cancer every year. In GB 1 in 8 cancers is work-related, that's 40,000 cases and 18,000 deaths per year. Each and every one could have been prevented, they are no accident but there is little action and no urgency from UK government or HSE to stop this preventable death toll while UK, EU and USA experts call for urgent action.

European Trade Union Institute (ETUI): Action on work cancer is decades overdue: “More protective laws, effective enforcement and unrelenting union action are needed to address Europe’s ‘immense’ occupational cancer problem.”

UK Alliance for Cancer Prevention: “Our current cancer strategies and plans are failing us they are inadequate, fragmented and unsustainable. Focus solely on ‘lifestyle factors’ comes at expense of action on occupational and environment risk factors, exposures and primary prevention. We are experiencing an epidemic of cancer and diseases linked to our 21st Century jobs and lives, while our strategies to deal with them are stuck in the last century.”

American Public Health Association (APHA) Resolution: Breast Cancer and occupation – a need for action. Based on ground breaking, award winning work by Stirling University researchers in Canada, Jim Brophy, Marge Keith and others , showing that women who work in in agriculture, plastic, food packaging, metal manufacturing and bar and gambling have a much increased risk of developing breast cancer. **#Put cancer out of work: Employers must comply with COSHH and REACH Regulations**

Asbestos in Schools & all Workplaces. Government Review of Asbestos in Schools just published, acknowledges school staff have died of mesothelioma, that children are more at risk and that asbestos will be removed when schools are refurbished under the Priority Schools Building Programme. But it has no strategy to deal with the risk from asbestos in most schools. The *Control of Asbestos at Work* Regs requires duty holders to manage asbestos safely, to consult employees & safety reps, to carry out a management survey on all pre 2000 buildings, to record presence of asbestos & its condition in an Asbestos Register. **Ask to see the Asbestos Register and management plan.** TUC and Union call for asbestos eradication: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/asbestos/asbestos-eradication-campaign>

More information: HSE: www.hse.gov.uk/ASBESTOS/managing/intro.htm **HSE Hidden Killer Campaign:** <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/tradesperson.htm> **Asbestos in Schools campaign:** www.asbestosexposureschools.co.uk/ **Joint Union Asbestos Committee, JUAC:** www.juac.org.uk/ echa.europa.eu/view-article/-/journal_content/title/know-more-about-the-effects-of-the-chemicals-we-use-in-europe **Hazards Cancer Resources:** www.cancerhazards.org/; www.hazards.org/chemicals/ www.hazards.org/cancer/ <https://www.etuc.org/press/end-workplace-cancer#.WKx5UfmLQdU>

Use the COSHH Hierarchy to #Put hazardous substances out of work

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