

FL7

COSHH essentials for large bakeries and flour mills



This information will help employers, the self-employed and franchisees comply with the Control of

Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to flour dusts, etc, and protect workers health.

It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice using dust extraction.

It covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

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

Main points

- Use only vacuum or wet cleaning. Clouds of dust result from disturbing settled dust overhead.
- Keep exposure as low as possible using all the controls in this sheet.
- Make sure the controls work.
- You need to use health surveillance - see sheet G402.
- Also see sheet FLO.

Cleaning

Control approach 2 Engineering control

Hazard

- ✓ Work with flour produces airborne dust. Stop dust getting into the air.
- ✓ Flour dust can cause asthma. Even short term exposures can cause harm.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop asthma developing. If an individual does develop occupational asthma, avoid further exposure.
- ✓ When all controls are applied properly, less than 2 mg/m³ flour dust is usually achievable (based on an 8-hour time-weighted average).

Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow access to cleaning staff during the task.
- ✓ Protect electrical installations from water ingress.

Equipment

- ✓ Check if RPE is needed to reduce exposures to an acceptable level. Carry out air sampling - see sheet G409.
- ✓ Fit an integrated vacuum cleaning system with multiple connections to a central dust collector.
- ✓ Fit a manometer or pressure gauge near the extraction point, to show that the extraction is working properly. Mark the acceptable range of readings.
- ✓ Fit an indicator or alarm to show if filters have blocked or failed.
- ✓ Otherwise, use a Class H vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter.

Caution: Never allow the use of brushes or compressed air for cleaning.

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ RPE may be needed even if the extraction works properly and is used correctly.
- ✓ If so, provide RPE with an assigned protection factor (APF) up to 20. See sheets R2 and R3.
- ✓ Disposable RPE is acceptable.
- ✓ Make sure all RPE is properly fit-tested - get advice from your supplier.
- ✓ Replace RPE filters as recommended by your supplier. Throw away disposable masks at the end of the shift.
- ✓ Train workers to use RPE properly.
- ✓ Keep RPE clean.

Other protective equipment

- ✓ Provide clean, dust-resistant coveralls.

Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Keep equipment in effective and efficient working order - follow instructions in suppliers' manuals.
- ✓ Look daily for signs of damage.
- ✓ You need to keep dust controls in good working order. See sheet G406 for advice on engineering controls.
- ✓ Get a competent ventilation engineer to examine the system thoroughly and test its performance regularly.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.

Health surveillance

- ✓ Use health surveillance for asthma - see sheet G402. There is a chance of asthma developing even with good controls in place.
- ✓ Consult an occupational health professional (see Useful links).

Training and supervision

- ✓ Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet FLO.
- ✓ Tell your workers that flour dust can cause asthma and how to recognise the early signs.

Further information

- *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* HSG53 (Third edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 0 7176 2904 X
- R2, R3 from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/rseries.htm
- G402, G406, G409 from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/gseries.htm
- For environmental guidelines see sheet FLO

Useful links

- Your trade association may advise on health and safety consultants and training providers.
- HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books
Tel: 01787 881165 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk.
- For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com.
- 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 the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see www.nhsplus.nhs.uk.

Employee checklist

- Is the extraction switched on and working properly?
Check the gauge.
- Work carefully – don't create dust.
- Check that any RPE works properly every time you use it.
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor. Don't just carry on working.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.

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.