

RB0

COSHH essentials for rubber manufacturers



This information will help managers comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, and protect workers health.

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

This sheet describes good practice for managing the control of exposure to rubber dust and rubber fume.

Advice for managers

Introduction

Rubber process dust means dust created in rubber making, where ingredients are handled, weighed, added to or mixed with uncured natural rubber or synthetic elastomers. Rubber process dust does not include dust from cured rubber, eg from buffing or trimming.

Rubber fume is given off when converting ingredients into finished parts or products by blending, moulding and extruding natural or synthetic rubber.

Rubber dust and fume can cause cancer. There is also a dermatitis risk for rubber makers.

Exposure limits

Rubber fume has an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) workplace exposure limit (WEL) of 0.6 mg/m³ as cyclohexane-soluble material.

Rubber process dust has a WEL of 6 mg/m³ (8-hour TWA).

You need to keep exposures as low as is reasonably practicable below these limits.

Advice sheets in this series

- RB1 Fume - general ventilation
- RB2 Bag opening and weighing
- RB3 Mixing rubber ingredients
- RB4 Rubber milling
- RB5 Rubber press (small articles)
- RB6 Cooling rack (small articles)
- RB7 Trimming and finishing (small articles)

Action

Getting these sheets helps you to assess the rubber dust and/or fume risk. Before acting, make sure the advice really fits your situation. Following all the advice in these sheets means that you will normally comply with WELs and exposure will be as low as is reasonably practicable. Read the advice in each of the sheet(s) you downloaded. Compare it with what you do now.

You may already have the right controls in place, but are they all working properly? When were they last checked? Are they always used when needed?

You need to keep all controls in good working order. This means mechanical controls (eg extraction, respirator), administrative controls (eg supervision, health surveillance) and operator behaviour (following instructions). Look at all aspects of the advice. Don't pick and choose - the points work together to provide 'adequate control'. See sheet G406 for advice on engineering controls.

You should carry out health surveillance for workers (see sheet G402 - occupational asthma and G403 - occupational dermatitis).

Show that control is being sustained – keep good records.

If you are in doubt, seek expert help. Remember, just because this advice means that you have to change old working practices or spend money on new controls, doesn't make it unsuitable! Decide how best to make any changes required 'across the board'.

If you do need expert help, please don't give up. Ask your trade association, trade union, or log onto www.bohs.org.

Facilities

Provide clean facilities: a washroom, showers, storage for clean and contaminated work clothing, and a refreshment area.

Information, training and supervision

Tell workers that rubber dust and fume can cause cancer, and rubber work can lead to dermatitis.

Train and supervise workers - you need to make sure they are doing the job in the right way, and using controls properly to reduce their exposure as low as possible. Include supervisors and managers in health and safety training.

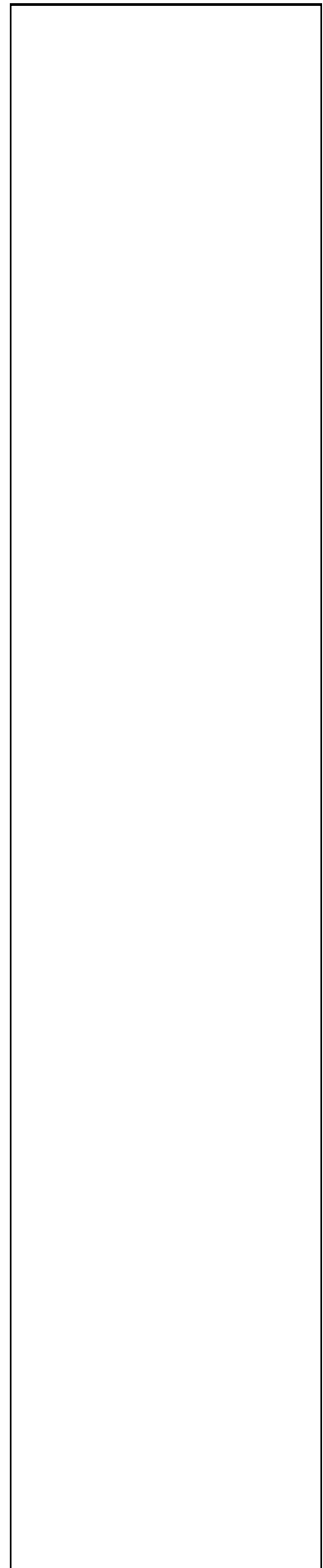
Training should include:

- how to use the dust and fume controls and how to check that they are working;
- how to maintain and clean equipment safely;
- how to use and look after personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- what to do if something goes wrong.

Remind workers that cotton and knitted work clothing hold onto dust that is later inhaled.

Supervision means checking workers:

- use the controls provided;
- follow the correct work method;
- turn up for health surveillance; and
- are following the rules on personal hygiene.

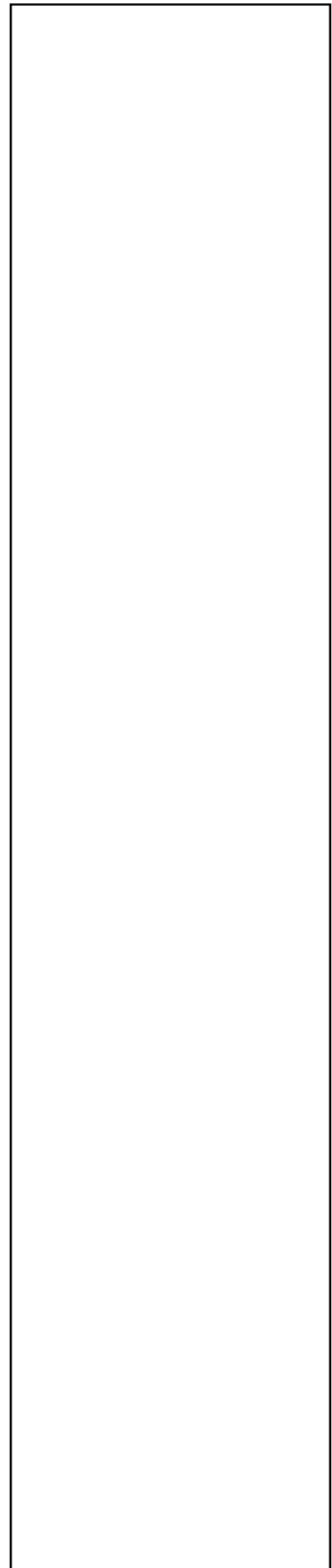


Environmental guidelines

Releases and wastes may be regulated within the Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) framework. You should consult your local authority or the Environment Agency.

In Scotland, consult the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

For more information, see www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs.



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.