Selecting protective gloves

COSHH essentials:
Supplementary advice

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) require employers to ensure that exposure is prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled. This guidance gives practical advice on how this can be achieved by applying the principles of good practice for the control of exposure to substances hazardous to health, as required by COSHH.

It is aimed at people whose responsibilities include the management of substances hazardous to health at work (eg occupational health specialists, anyone undertaking COSHH assessments, supervisors and is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives). It will help you carry out COSHH assessments, review existing assessments, deliver training and supervise activities involving substances hazardous to health.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, 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.

Control approach S  Harm via skin or eye contact

Introduction
Protective gloves are an important control option when other reasonably practicable methods of control do not give enough protection.

You can often assess risks to the skin on the hands by simply watching the tasks. However, for more complex situations or where very toxic substances are handled, a health and safety professional can help assess the risks. The five factors to consider when choosing protective gloves are:
- the substances handled (get up-to-date safety data sheets for all chemical products);
- other hand hazards;
- the type and duration of contact;
- the wearer in terms of size and comfort;
- the task and the need for robustness and sensitivity.

✓ For further help go to www.hse.gov.uk/skin.
✓ Gloves manufacturers/suppliers can advise on the range of gloves available to protect against the risks you have identified.
✓ Use the selection table on the back page and show it, with safety data sheets, to your personal protective equipment (PPE) supplier.
✓ Incorrect selection or misuse of protective gloves can lead to skin disease including dermatitis, burns or serious ill health – and can waste your money.
✓ Select gloves that are CE marked and are compatible with any other PPE worn.
✓ Prolonged glove use (more than 2 hours daily) is also associated with dermatitis.
✓ Involve your workers in selecting protective gloves.

Maintenance
✓ Gloves cannot be ‘maintained’. They nearly always become contaminated inside the second time they are put on. Contamination works through the glove even while it is not being worn. A succession of single use (disposable) gloves might offer better protection where gloves have to be put on and taken off frequently.
✓ Discard ‘single use’ gloves when they are taken off.
✓ Discard re-usable gloves at the end of the shift. They may look clean and undamaged inside, but they won’t be.
No glove is tested to give more than 8 hours’ protection against chemical permeation. Wear and tear, stretching and abrasion are not included in any testing.

Training and supervision

Train employees:
- to wipe gloves clean, where possible, before taking them off;
- to put on and take off gloves, without contaminating their skin;
- to only use ‘single use’ gloves once;
- to store clean gloves in a place free from contamination;
- to wash their hands after taking off protective gloves;
- to dispose of contaminated gloves safely as hazardous waste.

Essential information

You can find the full COSHH essentials series at www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials

Further information

Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register www.oshcr.org/

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.
## Memory aid for selecting protective gloves

Complete and hand to your supplier.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company:</th>
<th>Reference:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact:</th>
<th>Number of workers:</th>
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### Description of task:

#### Substance handled

- [ ] Wet work
- [ ] Hazardous substances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Form (solid, liquid, gas etc)</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Temperature (during use)</th>
<th>Label or material safety data sheet (MSDS) attached?</th>
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#### Other hazards present

**Mechanical:**

- [ ] Snag  
- [ ] Puncture  
- [ ] Abrasion  
- [ ] Cut  
- [ ] Tear

**Thermal:**

- [ ] Heat  
- [ ] Cold  
- [ ] Hot splashes  
- [ ] Hot sparks

**Biological:**

- [ ] Infectuous material (bacteria, viruses etc)
- [ ] Body fluids (blood, urine etc)

**Other (eg antistatic needed, radiation protection needed):**
## Type and duration of contact:

### Type of contact:

- [ ] Accidental splash
- [ ] Direct contact
- [ ] Immersion (note depth)
- [ ] Deposition

### Duration of contact:

- [ ] Occasional contact (note maximum contact time)
- [ ] Continual contact (note maximum contact time)

## Wearer requirements

### Sizes required:

### Inner gloves required:

### Length of arm to be protected:

### Any known skin allergies or other considerations:

## Task requirements

### Grip requirement:

- [ ] Dry grip
- [ ] Wet grip
- [ ] Oily

### Dexterity requirement:

- [ ] Precision
- [ ] Some dexterity
- [ ] Optimum protection, dexterity less important

### Colour requirements (eg to show up contamination):

### Special requirements (eg sterile, food grade):