



Controlling Exposure to Disinfectants

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The Details

Disinfectants are a vital part of hygiene maintenance. This is especially true of the food industry where they are used to control food contamination by microorganisms.

Although many food disinfectants are used on the basis that they do not taint the food or are harmful to the consumer, when used in large quantities, such as sterilising where the food is prepared, these disinfectants may be harmful to the skin, eyes or respiratory system.

The Principles / Rules

There are three pieces of legislation that relate to the control and exposure to disinfectants as follows: -

- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.
This requires employers to carry out a risk assessment on all substances used by their employees and take appropriate precautionary measures if there is a possible risk to their health.
- Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2009 (CHIP)
This deals with the classification and labelling of substances.
- Biocidal Products Regulations (BPR).
Biocidal products and their active ingredients are required to be rigorously tested to ensure that risks are minimised for people, animals and the environment.

Examples

Potential Hazards of Disinfectants

There are three main category types of disinfectants that can pose different hazards when used in large quantities. Each disinfectant needs to be assessed on an individual basis to quantify the risks that may be associated with it.

Surface active agents

Disinfectants contained within this category can contain some Biocidal properties. Some can cause eye and skin irritation whereas others can be extremely mild and used as skin disinfectants.

Alcohols

Disinfectants contained within this category are often used in skin cleaners and as a

preservative for various agents. However alcohols can also irritate the eyes and become flammable in certain conditions.

Peracetic acid

Disinfectants contained within this category can contain a strong oxidising agent that used in the food and drink industries. This oxidising agent can be very corrosive.

Other Information

Due to the potential dangers associated with the over exposure to disinfectants, washing facilities must be made readily available to employees. These facilities must be adequate and appropriate to the substances and quantities being used, and may include full showering facilities if necessary.

Although the use of PPE can protect from many of the harmful substances, is not guaranteed to be effective, therefore washing facilities must also be provided to ensure the health and safety of employees at all times.

Safety data sheets need to be accessible for all disinfectants used so that in the case of an emergency full details of the disinfectant can be determined and appropriate action taken.

I.e. Eye sprays might be needed to rinse chemicals from eyes and absorptive granules deployed to clean up spillages.

Regulations / Legislation Applicable

- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2009 (CHIP)
- Biocidal Products Regulations (BPR) please visit www.coshh-essentials.org.uk for information on appropriate control measures when dealing with harmful

Disclaimer


The above is intended as a quick and brief insight into the requirements for Controlling Exposure to Disinfectants and the contents are for guide only, for full comprehensive details on substances please visit <http://www.coshh-essentials.org.uk>


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