

## **HSE Targets Sensitisers and Carcinogens**

Whilst inspecting, the HSE is now prioritising two particular categories of hazardous materials: carcinogens and sensitisers. Read on to discover more about these materials and the seven key actions inspectors will expect you to have taken.

### **What's the Risk?**

Carcinogens are materials such as mineral oils and wood dust that have the potential to cause cancer. With them, the concern is the serious health harm that exposure could trigger.

Sensitisers (e.g. some resins, paints and glues) are materials that could cause an allergic reaction. The danger is that once people become sensitised, even minute quantities of the substance can set off a serious adverse reaction; some examples would be: a painful rash and/or inflammation (skin sensitisers) as well as asthma-like symptoms such as difficulty breathing (respiratory sensitisers.)

The effects of either of these sensitisers are both equally serious; the effects can be so detrimental that the person may not only be prevented from working with the material(s) in the short term, but may be prevented from working with them indefinitely. It's worth considering that earlier this year, rubber sealant maker TRP Polymer Solutions Ltd was fined £40,000 after admitting that it failed to manage skin sensitisation risks.

### **What's Needed?**

In order to avoid being caught out by inspectors, take these seven actions:

1. Show that you have identified all carcinogens and sensitisers (see the download for more information in addition to some examples.)
2. Check that you've included materials which are produced during processing (for example, wood dust) in addition to those which come in a pack, drum or can.
3. Be prepared to show inspectors your most up-to-date risk assessment under COSHH.
4. Be able to describe what action you are taking to minimise risks - start by seeking to eliminate these materials and replace them with safer alternatives. Then look at engineering controls such as ventilation and dust suppression. Finally, consider providing suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE.)
5. Set out how you ensure these controls work in practice, for example, how you check ventilation is effective and that PPE is worn whenever it is needed.
6. Quote examples of your information and training so that you can show you are meeting your legal duty to inform employees about the hazards (potential dangers) they face and the actions they need to protect their health.
7. Make sure you are providing any health surveillance that is recommended, for example, lung function testing for people who spray isocyanate-based paints.