

Isocyanates: 5 key points for bodyshops

Five essential actions every bodyshop must take to protect workers

HSE is inspecting businesses using isocyanate paints. What are the health risks?

Occupational asthma can permanently force workers out of the industry. Once sensitised, even minimal exposure can cause severe reactions. Isocyanates also cause dermatitis.

What are HSE inspectors checking?

Inspectors are checking how employers protect workers from exposure to isocyanate paint mist and ensuring proper health surveillance is in place. If you are visited by an inspector they will be looking at:

1. spray booth adequacy
2. Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) provision
3. clearance time procedure
4. biological monitoring and health surveillance

Non-compliance may result in enforcement notices or prosecution.

What you need to do to protect your workers

1. Spray facilities and respiratory protection

- Provide dedicated spray booths/rooms with extraction systems
- supply visor-type air-fed breathing apparatus (certified to BS EN 14594:2018)
- ensure booth runs at negative pressure
- never allow spraying outside proper facilities
- conduct regular maintenance and air quality testing (every 3 months)

Read the [HSE guidance on the types of respiratory protective equipment to use for spraying.](#)



2. Respect clearance times

- Recognise that invisible isocyanate mist remains dangerous after spraying
- measure and display clearance times at booth entrances
- workers must stay masked until outside spray area. Do not lift visors to check finish.

Read the [HSE guidance on measuring clearance times in spray booths.](#)



3. Implement regular testing

- Conduct annual biological monitoring (urine testing) for all sprayers
- take immediate action on elevated exposure levels. This signifies your control measures are not working.
- more frequent testing required for half-mask breathing apparatus users

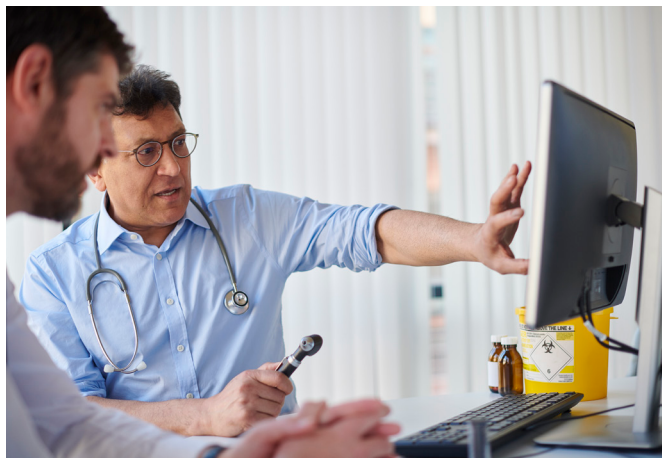
Read the [HSE guidance on biological monitoring.](#)



4. Health surveillance requirements

- Arrange regular health checks
- include lung function tests and skin examinations
- remove workers from exposure if health problems detected

Read the [HSE guidance on health surveillance.](#)



5. Training and competence

- Ensure all sprayers complete required training before using isocyanate-containing paints
- keep records of training completion
- review and update training every 5 years
- include COSHH risk assessment requirements



Legal obligations under COSHH regulations

You MUST

- Prevent or control worker isocyanate exposure
- monitor exposure levels through biological monitoring
- provide health surveillance for early detection
- maintain and test extraction systems every 14 months
- supply appropriate personal protective equipment (including respiratory protection)

What can happen if you're not compliant?

- HSE enforcement notices and potential prosecution
- significant fines and legal costs
- possible temporary shutdown orders
- worker health risks and compensation claims
- business reputational damage

Protect your health and career

Find out more, visit:

workright.campaign.gov.uk/isocyanates/



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