



Circle Voluntary Housing Association

Chemical Safety Policy

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1.0 Values:

The actions we take underpin our vision to make a difference by providing quality homes for people in housing need. At Circle Voluntary Housing Association, we firmly believe that how we interact with our customers, communities, colleagues, and key stakeholders is of fundamental importance. Our passionate commitment to caring about our tenants and the services we deliver has led to the development of our core values - six behaviour-based principles that speak directly to the characteristics we hold high.

WE HEAR

Willingness to embody all our values in a driven manner.

Empowerment of our staff and tenants

Honesty allows for complete understanding, it aids in the delivery of integrity and putting our tenants' best interests at the heart of our decision-making

Excellence reminds us of our continuous strive to be better

Accountability benefits all, transparency will foster this, and the creation of solid and reliable documentation will ensure that this accountability is enforced

Respect is the foundation of these values, without respect for ourselves, others, and the service we provide we must ask ourselves why we put so much of our valuable time into the job we do

2.0 Introduction:

Circle Voluntary Housing Association places the highest priority on the safety and wellbeing of its employees. It is the policy of the organisation to reduce, as far as is reasonably practicable, the risks associated with the use of, management, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous chemical substances. The organisation is committed to complying with its legal obligations under the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations, 2001 to 2021 and all other associated regulations.

These Regulations apply once any hazardous substance is used or generated, for example, cleaning chemicals within the organisation. Where hazardous substances are used or generated, Circle Voluntary Housing Association as the employer must identify all the chemical agents at places of work and use this information to create and maintain a chemical inventory (list). This list and the associated risk assessments must be kept on the health and safety database and be updated accordingly.

Chemical Safety risk assessments must be carried out based on activities involving chemicals - the risk depends not only on the chemical or chemicals (many activities involve more than one), but also on how it is being stored, transported, used, generated, or disposed of.

To ensure compliance under the associated Acts are met, Circle Voluntary Housing Association as the employer must:

- Determine the hazards associated with the activity by referencing the product label, Safety Data Sheet (SDS), or other industry guidance.
- Assess the risk to employees and others - what is the exposure? How much exposure? For how long? How often?
- Put prevention and control measures in place following the risk assessment.

- Develop and implement methods to deal with accidents, incidents, and emergencies
- Provide information, training to employees
- Consult with employees regarding safe use, storage, transportation, generation, or disposal of hazardous chemicals.
- Provide appropriate health surveillance.
- Keep exposure records.

In the case of a new activity involving hazardous chemical agents, work shall not commence until after an assessment of the risk of that **activity** has been made and the preventive measures identified in the risk assessment have been implemented.

This Chemical Safety Policy replaces all previous Chemical Safety policies and shall be applied consistently throughout the organisation by all staff required to work with or manage the storage, transport, and disposal of chemical.

3.0 Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure, in so far as is reasonably practicable, that exposure by employees and others, e.g., contractors, tenants, visitors, members of the public, to hazardous chemicals used in the working environment is prevented, or adequately controlled where use of substance is unavoidable.

The Policy defines the roles and responsibilities of all staff regarding the safe use and management and use of hazardous substances to support the organisation to meet its duty of care to staff and others required to carry out work on behalf of the organisation.

4.0 Scope:

This Policy applies to all Circle Voluntary Housing Association employees required to work with or manage the safe use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous chemicals. Chemicals that are hazardous to health include those that are toxic, harmful, irritant, or corrosive, for example materials such as detergents, disinfectants, paint, weedkiller products etc. Some, if not all, of these may create risks to health if not properly used.

5.0 Definitions:

The Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations, 2001 to 2021 provide the following definitions regarding the use of chemicals in the workplace:

- **“Chemical agent”** means any chemical element or compound, on its own or admixed, as it occurs in the natural state or as produced, used, or released, including release as waste, by any work activity, whether produced intentionally and whether placed on the market.
- **“Activity”** means any work in which chemical agents or hazardous chemical agents are used, or are intended to be used, in any process, including production, handling, storage, transport or disposal and treatment, or which result from such work. (Health and Safety Authority, 2022, online).

Once any hazardous substance is used or generated by the organisation, for example, cleaning chemicals or welding, then the Regulations apply.

Hazardous substances are easily recognisable using symbols which indicate risks to the user. Fig. 1 (below) provides a sample of commonly used hazardous substance symbols (please refer to Appendix 1 for full definition of each symbol shown).

6.0 Roles & Responsibilities:

All employees have responsibilities regarding the safe use of substances which are hazardous to health. These roles and responsibilities are defined in this section.

6.1 Chief Executive Officer:

The Chief Executive Officer of Circle Voluntary Housing Association has ultimate accountability and responsibility for the services under their governance and to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health, and welfare at work of all Circle Voluntary Housing Association employees.



Fig. 1: Common hazardous substance symbols

6.2 Leadership team:

The Leadership Team shall ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable that:

- The Chemical Safety Policy and associated procedures are reviewed as per Circle Voluntary Housing Policy Framework and endorsed by this team.
- A culture where Chemical Safety management and the associated Chemical Risk Assessment is embedded into the planning of safe place and safe systems of work regarding the use of chemicals and substances is promoted.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that all staff required to work with hazardous chemicals and substances receive appropriate training in the use, storage, transport, management, and disposal of such substances.

6.3 Management Team:

The Management Team shall ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable that:

- The Chemical Safety Policy and associated procedures are reviewed as per Circle Voluntary Housing Policy Framework and endorsed by this team.
- A culture where Chemical Safety management and the associated Chemical Risk Assessment is embedded into the planning of safe place and safe systems of work regarding the use of chemicals and substances is promoted.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that all staff required to work with hazardous chemicals and substances receive appropriate training in the use, storage, transport, management, and disposal of such substances.

6.4 Line Manager:

To support Circle Voluntary Housing Association to meet its obligations under the Acts and to ensure the safety of staff using hazardous chemicals is protected as far as is reasonably practicable, the line manager in charge of the location/ scheme/ employee, must ensure that the following actions are taken:

- Procurement of safer products where possible.
- Isolation of the person and/or the environment from the hazardous substance.
- Reporting the purchase of new hazardous substances introduced for use in the location/ scheme, ensuring these are checked against the organisations Chemicals Register and are assessed prior to use. This is carried out Chemical Risk Assessment for all work involving exposure to hazardous chemicals. This assessment must be based on the manufacturer/ supplier Safety Data Sheet, and knowledge of the work to be undertaken. The Chemical Risk Assessment must be carried out with the affected employee/s and a record of the assessment held in the Health & Safety database. This record must be easily accessible to relevant staff and consider vulnerable people such as pregnant women, young people, elderly persons.
- Review of central Chemical Register is carried out annually by each manager, ensuring all hazardous chemicals in use are present and have a current supplier Safety Data Sheet.
- Employees who may be in contact with the hazardous chemicals must be informed of the health and safety issues relating to the work being carried out.
- Employees who may be in contact with the hazardous chemical must be trained in safe, use, storage, disposal, and transport of the substance.
- Appropriate storage is provided at all locations/ schemes which hold hazardous substances. All hazardous substances must be stored under lock and key.
- Creation and implementation of safe disposal procedure for hazardous substances which adheres to environmental legislation with recycling being the principal option where available.
- Control of employee exposure to the hazardous chemical is at the lowest level reasonably practicable.
- Design and implement safe systems of work regarding the use of hazardous substances.
- Ensure staff are provided with correct and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Periodic review of current Chemical Risk Assessments with a minimum of annual review.

6.5 Employee & Contractors:

Employees and contractors required to work with hazardous chemicals are responsible for ensuring that tasks are carried out safely to protect themselves and others from harm. Employees and contractors must:

- Assist the organisation and their colleagues to create a safe working environment.
- Follow the procedures and safe systems of work put in place to prevent accidents and overexposure.
- Wear the correct PPE provided.
- Report and record all accident, spillages, and breakages.
- Attend medical check-ups when required to.
- Use cleaning and washing facilities provided by the organisation.
- Keep up to date with training provided.

6.6 Health & Safety Committee:

The Health & Safety Committee has a role in the reviewing of the Chemical Safety Policy and any associated procedure, and guidelines in line with Circle Voluntary Housing Associations Policy

Framework, or when directed by changes in local practices or national legislation. The Committee are also involved in the review and assessment of any other Chemical safety systems operated or proposed for use within the organisation.

6.7 Human Resources Department:

The HR Department shall:

- Ensure Chemical Safety training, including any training for associated procedures and guidelines, including new or additional training identified through the risk assessment process, is arranged as required.
- Ensure Chemical Safety Policy including use of technology and Personal Protective Equipment provided are covered during induction training for new members of staff required to use, manage storage of, transport or dispose of materials identified as a hazardous.
- Record and update the training records for each staff member.
- Where a staff member has been exposed to a hazardous chemical the Human Resources Department must keep exposure records.

7.0 Dissemination:

This Policy is available on Circle Voluntary Housing Association SharePoint policies page within folder titled "Health and Safety Policies & Procedures".

8.0 Implementation:

In conjunction with the requirement to familiarise themselves with this policy, staff required to work with hazardous substances must also attend any training or information sessions regarding safe use of such and read any additional information material provided to them, e.g., Safety Data Sheets, supplier information etc., as directed by their line manager.

9.0 Review and Audit of Policy:

This Policy will be reviewed in line with the Circle Voluntary Housing Associations Policy Framework Document or when directed by changes in local practices or national legislation.

10.0 Legislation & Health & Safety Authority (HSA) Chemical Safety Information:

- Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.
- Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations 2001
- Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, and
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) (Amendment) Regulations 2021
- Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 to 2016; Chapter 1 of Part 7: Safety Signs at Places of Work
- The Classification, Labelling and Packaging Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008
- European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road iii
- REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation & restriction of Chemicals) Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006; Annex II on Safety Data Sheets (Safety Data Sheet)

11.0 References:

Health and Safety Authority (2005). Chemical Agents Legislation. [online].
[Accessed 03rd October 2022]

12.0 Additional Chemical Safety Resources:

http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/General_Application_Regulations/Safety_Signs_at_Places_of_Work.pdf

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/information_sheets/sds_hazchem_info_sheet.pdf

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/information_sheets/communicating_chemical_hazards_at_work.pdf

<http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/pictograms.html>

13.0 Related Policies:

- Incident Management Policy & Procedure
- Risk Management Policy & Procedure
- Safety Statement
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff Training and Development Policy

14.0 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Hazard Symbols & What They Mean:

Hazard Symbol:	Definition:
 Flammable	Chemicals that may catch fire in contact with air, only need brief contact with an ignition source, have a very low flash point or evolve highly flammable gases in contact with water. The symbol is a flame. Meanings: Extremely flammable gas. Flammable gas. Extremely flammable aerosol. Flammable aerosol. Highly flammable liquid and vapour. Flammable liquid and vapour. Flammable solid.
 Toxic	Chemicals that at low and very low levels cause damage to health. The symbol is skull and crossbones. Meanings: Fatal if swallowed. Fatal in contact with skin. Fatal if inhaled. Toxic: if swallowed. Toxic in contact with skin. Toxic if inhaled
 Dangerous for Environment	Chemicals that may present an immediate or delayed danger to one or more components of the environment. The symbol is of a dead tree and fish. Meanings: Very toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects. Toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects. Usually found on pesticides, biocides, petrol, turpentine etc.
 Oxidising	A classification for chemicals and preparations that react exothermically with other chemicals. The symbol is a flame over a circle. Meanings: May cause or intensify fire, oxidiser. May cause fire or explosion, strong oxidiser. Usually found on bleach, oxygen for medical purposes etc
 Corrosive	Chemicals that may destroy living tissue on contact. The pictogram shows corrosion of material and skin. Meanings: May be corrosive to metals. Causes severe skin burns and eye damage. Usually found on drain cleaners, acetic acid, hydrochloric acid, ammoniac etc.

 Explosive	These are chemicals and preparations that explode. The symbol is a pictogram of an exploding bomb. Meanings: - Unstable explosive - Explosive; mass explosion hazard. - Explosive; severe projection hazard. - Explosive; fire, blast, or projection hazard. - May mass explode in fire.
 Irritant/ Harmful	Chemicals that may cause damage to health. Also known to mean caution. The symbol is an exclamation mark. Meanings: - May cause respiratory irritation. - May cause drowsiness or dizziness. - May cause an allergic skin reaction. - Causes serious eye irritation. - Causes skin irritation. - Harmful if swallowed. - Harmful in contact with skin. - Harmful if inhaled. - Harms public health and the environment by destroying ozone in the upper atmosphere.
 Gas Under Pressure	Gas stored under pressure, such as in gas containers. The symbol is a gas cylinder. Meanings: - Contains gas under pressure - may explode if heated. - Contains refrigerated gas - may cause cryogenic burns or injury. - Usually found on gas containers.
 Carcinogen, Mutagen, Respiratory sensitiser, Reproductive toxicity	Also known to mean long term health hazards. These are chemicals that can cause serious and long-term damage to health. The symbol shows a person with damage. Meanings: - May be fatal if swallowed and enters airways. - Causes damage to organs. - May cause damage to organs. - May damage fertility or the unborn child. - Suspected of damaging fertility or the unborn child. - May cause cancer. - Suspected of causing cancer. - May cause genetic defects. - Suspected of causing genetic defects. - May cause allergy or asthma symptoms or breathing difficulties if inhaled.