




# WORKSAFE

## What the Hazardous Substances Regulations mean for you

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10 KEY THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW AND DO



Hazardous substances are widely used across New Zealand workplaces, so it's important to know the risks and how to protect people from harm. All businesses must manage their hazardous substances risks. This brochure explains some of the key things you need to know and do.

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# Key points



About

## 1 in 3

businesses in New Zealand manufacture, use, handle or store hazardous substances.



Hazardous substances are a major contributor to the estimated.

## 600-900

deaths and 30,000 cases of serious ill health from work-related disease each year in New Zealand. They can also cause immediate harm such as from fires and explosions.



The Health and Safety at Work (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 2017 set out the rules for work-related activities involving hazardous substances.

### RECYCLING



All empty chemical containers pose a risk to people and environment. It is easy and safe to recycle these through AgRecovery.

### DISPOSAL



Unused chemicals pose a risk to people and environment. You can arrange for these to be collected from your farm through AgRecovery.

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# Know what you've got

You need to know what hazardous substances you have, and how much, in order to safely manage the risks to people.

## 1. Create an inventory

There are three main things you need to do:

- make an inventory of all the hazardous substances manufactured, used, handled or stored at your workplace including hazardous waste
- keep your inventory up-to-date and accurate
- make sure your inventory is readily accessible to emergency services workers.

The simplest way to prepare an inventory is to use the Hazardous Substances Calculator.

**TIP:** Before creating your full inventory, make a list of all your hazardous substances and work out which ones you can eliminate, substitute or minimise (see Assess the risk). This could reduce the number or quantities of substances you need to include on your inventory and the controls you need to put in place.

## 2. Make sure you have a safety data sheet from your supplier for each hazardous substance in your workplace

Safety data sheets provide comprehensive information about the properties of a hazardous substance, how it affects health and safety in the workplace and how to manage these risks.

### What's a hazardous substance?

A hazardous substance is any product or chemical that has explosive, flammable, oxidising, toxic, corrosive or ecotoxic properties.

- **Explosive:** explodes or causes explosion.
- **Flammable:** ignites easily and burns rapidly.
- **Oxidising:** could be gaseous, solid or liquid and can cause or intensify fire and explosion.
- **Toxic:** can harm people if it enters the body through contact, being inhaled or ingested. The effects can range from mild to life threatening, and can be immediate or long term.
- **Corrosive:** can cause severe skin burns and eye damage.
- **Ecotoxic:** is toxic to the environment.

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# Assess the risk

## 3. Know the risks associated with hazardous substances in your workplace, take appropriate measures to manage the risks and review these regularly

Your inventory and safety data sheets will give you a good picture of the risks that exist in your workplace and the controls you need to have in place to protect people from harm.

If you have created your inventory in the Hazardous Substances Calculator, the Calculator will have provided a list of the majority of the controls you need to put in place to manage the risks.

Once you have put the required controls in place, you will need to review your operation to identify any remaining risks and determine the most effective control measures to minimise those risks.

### Minimising risk

Ideally you should eliminate any substances you don't need. If you can't, consider (in this order):

- **Substitution:** Whether the substance could be replaced by one posing less risk, such as substituting solvent based inks with inks made from vegetable oil.
- **Isolation:** Isolating the hazard can prevent people coming into contact with it (eg spray painting in a fully automated booth).
- **Engineering control measures:** Apply physical control measures to minimise risk, such as ventilation.
- **Administrative controls:** Apply processes to make your workplace safer (eg job rotation to reduce the time someone is exposed to a hazardous substance).
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** If the risk remains after all other measures have been applied, you must supply and ensure the use of personal protective equipment. For example, respirators can protect staff from inhaling hazardous substances. Note that PPE is not always fully effective. See the WorkSafe website for information on health monitoring.

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# Take control

‘Controls’ are measures that help you manage the risks posed by a hazardous substance.

Here are some of the key things to do:

## **4. Inform and train your workers**

Everyone who works with and around hazardous substances must have the knowledge and practical experience to do so safely. You need to make sure workers know of the hazardous substances in their work area, along with the dangers they pose, and get the training and supervision necessary to work safely with and around them. You must also keep a record of the training and instruction provided to each worker.

## **5. Label your containers**

Check that your containers of hazardous substances are clearly and correctly labelled so people know what’s inside. Labels must be maintained and readable. You have labelling responsibilities for:

- substances that have come from a supplier and are therefore already labelled
- substances that you decant or transfer into a smaller container at your workplace
- stationary tanks, process containers and transportable containers
- hazardous waste.

## **6. Install signs**

Signs provide clear, concise information and are often the first warnings people will have about your hazardous substances. Place signs at key points such as entranceways, and on buildings, or in outdoor areas, where substances are used or stored. They should be clearly visible and let people know that hazardous substances are present, the general type of hazard and what to do in an emergency.

Check the regulations for signage requirements specific to your industry.

## 7. Store your hazardous substances safely

Where and how you store hazardous substances will depend on the type of substance and the amount you have. The Regulations prescribe requirements for different situations, and types, classes and quantities of hazardous substances.

A safety data sheet includes handling and storage information about the substance.

**TIP:** Keep the amount of hazardous substances you store to a minimum. This will make it easier to manage what you have and may reduce your compliance needs and costs.

## 8. Highly hazardous substances

Some substances (eg class 1, class 6.1A and 6.1B substances), or larger quantities of substances, may need extra measures, such as a certified handler, controlled substance licence, compliance certificate or tracking requirements. Use the Hazardous Substances Calculator to help you find out what you need to do.

## 9. Plan for an emergency

You, your workers, and emergency service workers need to know what to do – and who is responsible for what – if an emergency occurs. Preparing for an emergency depends on the types and quantities of hazardous substances you use and store. Things you must do include:

- training your workers about what to do in an emergency
- keeping your inventory of hazardous substances readily accessible to emergency services workers
- labelling all hazardous substances and ensuring the label is readable and stays on the container
- having a safety data sheet for each hazardous substance at your workplace; and making them readily accessible to workers and emergency services
- being prepared to deal with a spill or leak of hazardous substances.

## 10. Dispose of your unwanted substances safely

Hazardous substances also need to be disposed of appropriately. You will find information about disposing of products by reading their safety data sheets and contacting your local council for disposal advice. Agrecovery provides a service for the disposal of agrichemicals: [www.agrecovery.co.nz](http://www.agrecovery.co.nz)

## Recycling of empty agrichemical containers

- Triple-rinse with water and leave to drain and dry.
- Ensure no residue remains inside or out.
- Clearly mark as 'Rinsed x 3'.
- Find site locations on the Agrecovery website.
- Bring to the nearest Agrecovery site with lid removed (**free** for products from participating brands).
- Containers are inspected before acceptance and a recycling receipt issued.

## Safe disposal of unwanted chemicals

- Make an inventory, noting chemical name and manufacturer, original size, remaining volume and condition of the container.
- Book via the Agrecovery website or call them for a form (most chemical recovery is free, but some incur a charge).
- Mark as 'not to be used' and store safely.
- Agrecovery will pick them up next time they are in your area (this may take up to 24 months).

**Freephone:** 0800 AGRECOVERY (0800 247 326)

**Landline:** 04 499 6777

**Email:** [info@agrecovery.org.nz](mailto:info@agrecovery.org.nz)

**Website:** [www.agrecovery.co.nz](http://www.agrecovery.co.nz)



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# Where to find help

## Tools and resources are available to help you. Go to:

- the WorkSafe New Zealand website for information and guidance about the Regulations and your responsibilities: [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)
- the Hazardous Substances Toolbox [www.hazardoussubstances.govt.nz](https://www.hazardoussubstances.govt.nz) for more guidance and tools. This includes:
  - your practical guide to working safely with hazardous substances
  - the Hazardous Substances Calculator for help with creating an inventory and seeing the controls you need to put in place
- the Health and Safety at Work (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 2017: [www.legislation.govt.nz](https://www.legislation.govt.nz)

## The EPA and WorkSafe – who does what?

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) regulates hazardous substances under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act. This role includes:

- setting approvals for hazardous substances for use in New Zealand
- setting the rules for labels, safety data sheets, packaging and disposal of hazardous substances
- enforcement responsibilities to make sure importers and manufacturers of hazardous substances have HSNO approvals for their substances and the right labelling, packaging and safety data sheets
- setting the rules to protect the environment, and people in non-workplaces from hazardous substances.

For more about the EPA's responsibilities go to: [www.epa.govt.nz](https://www.epa.govt.nz)

WorkSafe regulates workplace health and safety under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) which encompasses the Health and Safety at Work (Hazardous Substances) Regulations. This role includes:

- providing guidance, information and tools to help organisations understand their obligations
- enforcing the rules for the work-related manufacture, use, handling and storage of hazardous substances
- managing the compliance certification regime
- developing safe work instruments to set more detailed and technical rules for hazardous substances.

Requirements relating to disposal and protecting the environment in workplaces are enforced by WorkSafe under HSNO.

