



INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

FILE NO: N08/02023

**Title : Air Cargo - Procedures for Managing
Chemical Hazards in the Workplace**

Date : July 2008

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THIS INSTRUCTION AND GUIDELINE REFERS TO:

PRACTICE STATEMENT NO:

PS2008/08 Inspection and Examination of Air Cargo – Imports

PS2008/30 Inspection and Examination of Air Cargo - Exports

PUBLISHED DATE: 26 SEPTEMBER 2008

AVAILABILITY: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

SUBJECT: Procedures for Managing Chemical Hazards in the Workplace.

PURPOSE: To provide guidance to staff in dealing with chemical hazards in the workplace or if they are detected in air cargo consignments.

OWNER: NATIONAL MANAGER CARGO OPERATIONS NORTH

CATEGORY: OPERATIONAL

CONTACT: DIRECTOR CARGO BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT (AIR)

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

This Instruction and Guideline has been developed to provide guidance to staff in dealing with chemical hazards in the workplace or if they are detected in air cargo consignments.

It also details general procedures relating to Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) considerations, COMCARE reporting, Customs Incident Reporting Centre (CIRC) and Employee Assistance Providers (EAP).

It is important to read the complete Instruction and Guideline before proceeding.

INTRODUCTION

The intended policy outcomes of this document are to ensure that Customs meets its legislative obligations and duty of care to successfully manage risks associated with chemical hazards in the workplace and ensure a safe and healthy work environment.

The hazard could range from common household chemicals, to more toxic industrial chemicals, to highly toxic chemical warfare agents.

This document recognises that:

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- While the threat of deliberate chemical exposures is rather unlikely, it is more likely to increase than decrease (given the recent increase in terrorist activities and hoax incidents);
- The likely consequences of a deliberate chemical incident are very serious, if not life threatening;
- Technological advances in testing and detection equipment are likely to improved identification of chemical hazards; and
- All staff should be aware of potential hazards and what to do in a chemical incident.

INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

OH&S Considerations

Workplace safety is the responsibility of every Customs Officer.

Customs Officers are to wear OH&S issue personal protection equipment (e.g. steel cap boots, high visibility vests, etc) at all times.

Prior to commencing ***any*** examination, Customs Officers ***must*** assess the working environment and circumstances of each individual tasking to identify factors which may impact on officer's personal safety.

Officers should not rely solely on Customs and associated documentation/declarations when determining the contents of a consignment.

Physical deconstruction should not proceed until a full visual assessment of the whole consignment has been completed and where necessary safety issues have been mitigated.

Officers are to handle cargo according to safe lifting guidelines (*OH&S Hazard Instruction & Guideline – Manual Handling*) and where applicable, use team lifting or mechanical devices to prevent injury.

Customs Supervisors and Managers are to ensure that sufficient First Aid trained officers are available in the workplace.

Comcare

All injuries or incidents are to be reported in Human Resource Information Service (HRIS), to a supervisor and to Comcare via the '*Notification and Report of an Incident*' form. The Regional OH&S Coordinator should also be informed.

Note that there are legal reporting timeframes when reporting to Comcare about instances of death, serious personal injury, incapacity or a dangerous occurrence.

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Notifiable workplace incidents are to be reported to Comcare via facsimile on telephone **1300 305 916**. Timeframes as follows:

Death	-within 2 hours
Serious Personal Injury	-within 24 hours
Incapacity greater than 30 days	-within 24 hours of becoming aware of duration
Dangerous Occurrence	-within 24 hours

All hazards are to be reported according to the OH&S Hazard Reporting Process. Specifically, hazards are reported to an immediate supervisor and to the Regional OH&S Coordinator on the *Hazard Report Form* where the hazard cannot be immediately eliminated, or further action is required.

N.B. Failure to comply with the above timeframes is a breach of section 68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* and regulation 37A of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Safety Arrangements) Regulation 1991*.

Customs Incident Reporting Centre (CIRC)

Any incidents that arise during an examination that have the capacity to interrupt or affect Customs business, including security incidents, must be reported to the Customs Incident Reporting Centre (CIRC) on telephone **1800 303 387**.

Employee Assistance Provider (EAP)

If required, the Customs Employee Assistance Provider (EAP), OSA Group, is available to work with staff involved in a critical incident. Trained counsellors can be deployed to a workplace within 2 hours. The OSA Group's contact number is **1300 361 008**, 24 hours - 7 days.

Procedures

Identify the Hazard

It may be very difficult to recognise chemical hazards given their diverse form and effect. Chemicals may take a solid, liquid or gas form and some gases are odourless, colourless and tasteless. Where there has been an accidental leak or exposure the package or container should identify the chemical. This may also include details about the hazard and its potential dangers. If a chemical has been deliberately released it is unlikely that positive identification can be made without specialist equipment or expertise.

Spraying devices, leaking packages or containers, a bursting device or explosive can deliberately spread chemical agents. Pay particular attention to containers sealed in a very thorough and unusual manner, or where multiple sealing layers are used for no obvious reason. If suspicious, do not open such containers. Instead, determine the apparent owner so you can assess the likelihood of a hazard being present. Conversely, pay particular attention to containers that seem designed to distribute their contents, such as mail with small cuts that leak a fine powder, or containers of liquids that seem designed to leak.

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Customs uses a range of equipment to help detect possible chemical hazards in various workplaces. This equipment is becoming increasingly sophisticated and will help Customs better identify hazards with confidence and safety. Situations that may involve potential hazards include:

- Testing and examining shipping containers;
- Undertaking ship searches;
- Examining international cargo;
- Examining and processing postal items;
- Searching or handling passenger baggage; and
- Conducting wharf patrol and counter terrorist activities.

Assess the Risk

Chemical incidents are a serious threat to employees, customers, assets, operations and facilities. Chemicals may be inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin. The effects may be felt immediately or delayed and the agent can incapacitate, or cause serious injury or death, depending on the dose received. Chemical incidents are likely to have some common characteristics:

- They are likely to be one-off or isolated events;
- The likelihood of accidents or illness resulting from the incident will be variable but the potential consequences will usually be relatively serious; and
- They are likely to fall into the high or medium risk category due to their potential consequences.

It is therefore important that this risk assessment process is conducted speedily and decisively and a move to control the risk/s is made as soon as practicable.

Control the Risk

It will be difficult to eliminate most chemical hazards once identified, so staff will need to react quickly and implement control measures that minimise or negate the risk. The most common control methods involve:

- Modifying the hazard – neutralising or reducing the risk associated with the hazard;
- Isolating the hazard – by covering it or evacuating people from around the hazard; and
- Using personal protective equipment (PPE) – to minimise exposure.

Only undertake control measures where there is no chance of increasing the risks associated with the hazard. **Under no circumstances move, touch or tamper with the chemical hazard if in doubt.**

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In this event, immediately evacuate the area and follow established local evacuation and/or emergency procedures. This is likely to include contacting the Customs (or building) Chief Warden (or deputy) and following their further instructions.

If you believe you have been exposed to a chemical agent:

- Avoid inhalation and move away from the site as quickly as possible;
- If outdoors, move upwind. If indoors, move outside, covering your face with a handkerchief or cloth if possible;
- If you think you may have droplets of chemical on your clothing or skin, immediately remove the outer clothing and wash exposed skin with cold water;
- Try to isolate the scene, prevent other unprotected persons from entering;
- If you feel effects such as shortness of breath, dizziness, choking, dimming of vision or muscular twitching - seek medical assistance immediately;
- Isolate affected person/s from contact with others to avoid further contamination.
- Do not disturb the package any further. Do not pass it around. Do not try to clean up the powder or liquid, or brush off your clothing;
- If possible, place an object over the package such as a large waste bin without disturbing it;
- Stay in your office or immediate work area. This also applies to co-workers in the same room. Prevent others from entering the area and becoming contaminated. Remember you are not in immediate danger;
- Keep your hands away from your face to avoid contaminating your eyes, nose and mouth;
- If possible (without leaving your workspace) wash your hands;
- If possible have the building ventilation system shut down and turn off any fans or equipment that is circulating air around your workplace; and
- Follow emergency procedures.

Use the following emergency procedures for every chemical and explosive device incident. The actual order of each step depends on the nature and seriousness of the hazard or incident, and any established emergency procedures at the location.

- Remain calm;
 - Survey the scene and **ensure your immediate safety** and then consider the safety of others (if possible without harm to you);
 - Call for help or get someone else to do so. Depending on the circumstances this will be to 000 (Fire Brigade and/or Ambulance) and/or the Customs or building Chief Warden (or deputy) and/or an appropriate First Aid officer. You should advise that:
 - There has been a chemical incident; and
 - (If applicable) you and/or others have been exposed and/or injured
- Also provide:**
- A description of the incident or device, including what action has been taken;
 - The exact location of the incident or device such as the street address and building information;

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- An estimate of the number of victims or people exposed;
- Descriptions of any symptoms or obvious injuries; and
- Indications of wind direction (the direction the wind is coming from).
- Apply appropriate first aid if safe to do so.

Getting appropriate medical advice following injury and actual or possible exposure to chemical materials is important. There may be no obvious symptoms or signs of exposure, so appropriate testing and management strategies are essential. This will help minimise, or negate, any injury or illness.

Monitor and Review

After a possible chemical exposure incident, it is important those involved get the results of any testing or investigation as soon as possible. Staff need information on any investigation processes so they are fully informed of progress and outcomes affecting them.

RELATED POLICIES AND REFERENCES

PRACTICE STATEMENTS

Customs OHS Policy – OHS Risk Management – HSMA 2
OHS Policy Guideline – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
OHS Policy Guideline – First Aid;

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

- *Customs OHS Hazard Instructions and Guidelines*
 - Hazardous substances*
 - Chemical hazards*
 - Manual Handling*

Chief Executive Instruction

- Number 4.12 refers to the use of Mobile Telephones
- Number 5.5 refers to the use of Commonwealth Vehicles

Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991

- Section 68 states the reporting timeframes for notifiable workplace incidents

Occupational Health and Safety (Safety Standards) Regulations 1994

- Regulation 37A relates to notifiable workplace incidents

Customs Act 1901

- Section 30 refers to Customs control of goods

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- Section 33 refers to persons not to move goods subject to the control of Customs
- Section 50, 51 and 51A relate to prohibited imports including certain controlled substances
- Section 112 and 112A relate to prohibited exports including certain controlled substances
- Section 186 relates to the general powers of examination of goods subject to Customs control
- Section 186A relates to the power of officers to take copies of documents examined under s.186
- Section 229 relates to forfeited goods
- Section 233BAA refers to Tier 1 goods
- Section 233BAB refers to Tier 2 goods

Customs Regulations 1926

- Regulation 179AA and Schedule 1AA relate to Tier 1 and Tier 2 goods

Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956

Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations 1958

CONSULTATION

INTERNAL

The following internal stakeholders have been consulted in the development of these Instructions and Guidelines.

CARGO BRANCH
PEOPLE AND PLACE BRANCH

EXTERNAL

STATE FIRE BRIGADE/SERVICES
STATE AMBULANCE SERVICES
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES
STATE AIRPORT AUTHORITIES

Approval

Approved on 19 September 2008 by:
Approving Officer

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