

CAERPHILLY COUNTY
BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY ON THE
EXPOSURE TO LATEX AT WORK

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Issue 3

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Mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn ar gael yn Gymraeg ac mewn ieithiodd neu fformatau eriall ar gais.

NOTE

Wherever the designation Manager is used throughout this policy, it is taken to mean Head of Service, Head Teacher, Line Manager, Supervisor, and Officer in Charge or anyone who has a responsibility for employees through their work.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document sets out the responsibilities for managing exposure to products containing natural rubber latex, particularly disposable single-use protective gloves, that employees may come into contact with or use during the course of their work. This policy supercedes the original policy that was effective from January 2005.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. The Authority recognises that its employees are its most valuable resource in delivering high quality services to the community and will take all practical steps to ensure the health and safety of Authority employees, contractors and visitors to and users of Authority premises.
- 2.2. The Authority recognises there are inherent risks associated with products containing natural rubber latex (NRL), and prohibits the use of such products where safer alternatives can be provided and used. The use of products containing natural rubber latex (particularly latex gloves) will only be acceptable where the use of latex-free alternatives is unavoidable, where a service area manager provides written justification based on a risk assessment, and where this is verified by the Occupational Health Department or relevant Directorate Health and Safety Officer.
- 2.3. The effective control of these risks will be delivered through the prohibition of latex products where practicable, correct management of any exposure to latex products as set out in this policy and the provision of appropriate training, instruction, supervision and health surveillance. To be effective this policy requires the full co-operation of management and employees at all levels.
- 2.4. The Authority accepts it has specific duties under the various pieces of legislation stated below that are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy has been agreed with the Trade Unions and applies to all employees.
- 3.2. This policy will be reviewed at least annually to ensure it is in line with current legislation.
- 3.3. The effective date of this Issue 3 policy is: tbc

4. LEGISLATION

4.1. This policy along with its supporting procedures is designed to ensure the Authority meets its legal obligations as stated in the:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended);
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended).

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

NB All employees have a legal responsibility to comply with health and safety law and the provisions of this policy. Failure to do so could result in personal and / or corporate liability.

5.1. The Chief Executive Officer will:

- Be ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy within Caerphilly County Borough Council.

5.2. Directors will:

- Be responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this Corporate Policy and Corporate Management Arrangements, and also of the associated Directorate arrangements within their service areas.
- Ensure that appropriate resources are made available for the effective operation of the policy and the associated Corporate and Directorate management arrangements, including information and training.

5.3. Managers will:

- Ensure that non-latex products are utilised where it is practicable to do so. For example, disposable medical gloves should be vinyl, nitrile, polyisoprene or other synthetic materials, and non-latex balloons and rubber bands should be used in preference to latex-based products.
- Ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out that identifies the work activities that may expose employees to products containing natural rubber latex, and assesses the associated risks to employees created by exposure to such products. Risk assessments should ideally be carried out by the line-manager with the responsibility for the identified work activity(ies) that may expose employees to products containing natural rubber latex, and should have received suitable training in how to conduct such risk assessments.
- Reduce the risk by ensuring that the exposure of employees to products containing natural rubber latex is minimised;

- In the case of gloves, where the risk assessment findings show that alternative non-latex gloves are not effective for certain activities, single use, disposable natural rubber latex gloves which are low-protein (<50mcg/g) and powder free may be provided. Where the provision of such gloves is impracticable for the nature of the work activity (e.g. rubber gloves worn in a kitchen environment for washing dishes etc), latex gloves with a flock lining may be provided.
- Where identified as necessary by a risk assessment, notify Occupational Health of any employees using items containing natural rubber latex to allow relevant health surveillance to be undertaken.
- Ensure that where employees use items containing natural rubber latex that they receive appropriate information, instruction and training regarding the risks and appropriate control measures associated with natural rubber latex. This should include information on the allergy risk, good hygiene practices (e.g. washing hands after removing latex gloves), and how to dispose of products containing natural rubber latex responsibly.
- Ensure that Occupational Health is notified immediately in the event of any employee with a known allergy to natural rubber latex, or any employee with health symptoms suggestive of them suffering an allergic reaction
- Ensure that they, and their employees, comply with this policy, the associated Corporate Management Arrangements and appropriate Directorate arrangements, in order to effectively manage the risk associated with natural rubber latex.

5.4. Each employee using latex gloves or working with products containing natural rubber latex will:

- Comply with any working procedure or precautionary measure introduced to prevent or reduce potential risk from working with latex e.g. good hygiene practises.
- Carry out their own weekly skin-examinations for signs of occupational skin disease.
- Immediately report to their line manager any potential symptoms of latex sensitisation e.g. skin rash, hives, itching, nasal or eye problems, sinus problems or asthma.
- Attend any health surveillance as deemed necessary by Occupational Health.

5.5. The Corporate Health and Safety Unit will:

- Ensure that this policy is reviewed at least every 2 years to ensure it is in line with current legislation and best practice.

- Provide advice and information relating to natural rubber latex and latex allergies (in conjunction with the Occupational Health Department).
- Audit compliance with the policy.

5.6. The Directorate Health and Safety Officer will:

- Ensure that any necessary Directorate arrangements are developed in accordance with this Corporate policy and the associated Corporate Management Arrangements.
- Ensure the communication of the Corporate Policy and Directorate arrangements to all relevant employees.
- Monitor the effective implementation of this Corporate Policy, and the associated Corporate and Directorate management arrangements.

5.7. The Occupational Health department will, where employees use products containing natural rubber latex during the course of their work:

- Liaise with managers where their written justification based on risk assessment identifies the use of items containing natural rubber latex (particularly gloves) as necessary, and authorise the justification if appropriate.
- Should the written justification based on risk assessment show that the use of products containing natural rubber latex is unavoidable, and thereby permitted, ensure that pre-employment screening is carried out before an employee commences work which takes into account their respiratory health and skin condition. This will form a baseline for future health surveillance.
- Where requested by managers, ensure that an annual health questionnaire is conducted either by questionnaire or face-to-face for employees identified as coming into contact with products containing natural rubber latex.
- Carry out health surveillance for employees identified as being at risk of sensitisation as a result of a referral from the employees' line manager.
- Ensure employees sensitised to natural rubber latex, or to chemicals used in the manufacture of products containing natural rubber latex, and those considered as being at higher risk of developing such sensitisation are clinically assessed.
- Liaise with Managers to ensure that employees who use products containing natural rubber latex are provided with information and instruction on carrying out skin checks, particularly of hands.
- Maintain a record of the health surveillance that must be kept for 40 years.

5.8. The Procurement Section will:

- Purchase latex-free products so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Only purchase products containing natural rubber latex (NRL) where the manager produces written justification, based on a risk assessment authorised by the Occupational Health Department and Directorate Health and Safety Officer, showing that suitable alternative products free from natural rubber latex are either not available, or are not as effective at reducing the risk for which they are provided as products containing natural rubber latex.
- Only purchase single use, disposable natural rubber latex gloves that are low-protein (<50mcg/g) and powder free where it is not possible to use latex-free gloves.