

Focus on IFA's work

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The GDA Hazardous Substance Check

Problem

Every year in Germany, more than 1500 people die as a result of job-related cancer. The cancer can be caused by exposure to carcinogens many years ago. Despite constant improvements to occupational safety and health, carcinogens still pose a risk to workers. For example, during welding, there is an increased risk arising from exposure to welding fumes containing chromium trioxide and nickel oxide, during wood processing there is an increased risk from carcinogenic beech wood dust and oak wood dust, in the vehicle repair industry there is an increased risk from exposure to benzene, and in the building renovation industry there is an increased risk resulting from the release of asbestos.

Unfortunately, there are still companies that fail to comply fully with the statutory occupational safety and health requirements: For example, even more than 20 years after the introduction of the legal requirement to conduct a risk assessment, only around half of the companies in Germany comply with this requirement.

Activities

With the "Safe Handling of Carcinogenic Substances" work programme, the member organisations of the Gemeinsamen Deutschen Arbeitsschutzstrategie (GDA, Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy) are aiming to use the third GDA period to sustainably improve this situation.



Cover of the brochure

As part of this GDA period, the German social accident insurance institutions developed the GDA Hazardous Substance Check in collaboration with the Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the German Social Accident Insurance (IFA) and the Institute for Prevention and Occupational Medicine of the German Social Accident Insurance (IPA). It is a low-threshold service that can be used by all those involved in occupational safety

and health to predict and effectively assess the risks to workers arising from carcinogens at the workplace and to implement effective protective measures. One particular aim of the GDA Hazardous Substance check is to make it easier for small and medium-sized companies to familiarise themselves with the risk assessment process by providing the framework for them to perform a self-assessment.

The GDA Hazardous Substance Check is also used by regulatory staff of Germany's federal states and labour inspectors of accident insurance institutions to provide active assistance to companies as part of this work programme: Performing a GDA Hazardous Substance Check prior to inspections of selected small and medium-sized enterprises provides an excellent starting point for further guidance.

Results and application

The GDA Hazardous Substance Check is available as a free online tool or as a free brochure. It has a modular structure and is made up of nine components, with each component consisting of three to five questions: Initial Overview, Finding Information, Exposure, Level of Exposure, Protective Measures, Training and Operational Instructions, Preventative Healthcare and Occupational Health and Safety Specialist, Exposure Record, Documentation Although the modules build on each other, they can be accessed and used separately. This means that they can be completed in any order and either in full or selectively according to the relevant requirements.

Each of these modules starts off with a broader, general question that simplifies the introduction to the relevant topic. The additional questions of the GDA Hazardous Substance Check can be answered using a traffic light rating system.

Repeated useful sections help users to answer the individual questions: What is meant by this? What needs to be done? Further information (related topics and in-depth information), practical aids (templates, tools etc.) and legal foundations. The offering is rounded off by a comprehensive glossary with relevant technical terms.

Users can break off while completing the check at any time, save their progress and pick up from where they left off at a later point in time. Results relating to individually entered measures can be exported as a report.

Users

Small and medium-sized companies, safety experts, labour inspectors

Further information (in German only)

- Access to the online tool: www.gda-gefahrstoff-check.de
- [GDA Hazardous Substance Check brochure](#)
- [IFA webpage for the GDA Hazardous Substance Check](#)

Technical enquiries

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Literature requests

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