

COSHH Reaction Categories

(taken from 2007 safety Guidelines - <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/chemistry/about/safety>)

Risk assessments require reactions to be placed into categories **A-D** as follows, requiring decreasing levels of supervision:

- A** This activity **must** be directly supervised
- B** The advice and approval of your supervisor must be sought before the task is started
- C** The work involves risks requiring careful attention to the safety related aspects of it. The worker has been trained in the task and has demonstrated competence
- D** Tasks in this category carry no undue risks

Reactions involving substances which are carcinogens, mutagens or teratogens; pose risk of serious eye damage; are pyrophoric, very highly toxic, or pose an explosion risk **are by default placed in category A**. A list of specific substances likely to be in this category is given on the back of the General Safety Assessment form.

All 1st yr, 2nd yr and 3rd yr undergraduate laboratory experiments **are also by default placed in category A**.

Once a researcher has demonstrated competence in the use of these substances, their Academic supervisor has the discretion to amend their category (e.g. **A** to **B** or **C**) by signing the appropriate place on the back of the General Safety Assessment Form.

Which category should be used?

For the reagents and procedures listed on the back of the General Safety Assessment form, the category is clear - they are category **A** unless the supervisor has downgraded them by signing the back of the General Safety Assessment form. For other reactions, the choice of category may be subjective and will depend on the worker's experience. In the early stages of a PhD, and for undergraduate project students, most reactions (apart from those involving category **A** procedures) will be in category **B**. As the researcher's experience increases, some reactions can be placed in lower categories. In all cases, the supervisor should check that the appropriate category is chosen.

Clearly, postdoctoral workers may already have significant experience in performing category **A** procedures prior to joining the Department, and their Academic supervisor may downgrade these immediately to **B** or **C** by signing the appropriate places on their General Safety Assessment Form.