CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY ON THE USE OF LATEX AT WORK

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Contents

SECTION		PAGE NUMBER
SECTION 1	INTRODUCTION	3
SECTION 2	POLICY STATEMENT	3
SECTION 3	SCOPE	3
SECTION 4	LEGISLATION	3
SECTION 5	RESPONSIBILITIES	4
SECTION 6	ARRANGEMENTS	7
SECTION 7	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	9
APPENDIX 1	QUESTIONNAIRE TO IDENTIFY NRL SENSITIVITY	10
APPENDIX 2	LATEX USE FLOWCHART	12

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 policy sets out the arrangements and responsibilities for managing exposure to latex products (e.g. protective gloves or medical devices) that employees may come into contact with or use during the course of their work.

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 natural rubber latex (NRL) and prohibits the use of latex where safer alternatives can be provided. Latex products will only be acceptable where the manager provides written justification based on a risk assessment and this is verified by the Occupational Health Department.

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 (as described in Section 4) 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 except; initially school based staff, though the Council would recommend that School Governing Bodies adopt the policy.

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 the policy is: 29th March 2005.

4. LEGISLATION

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

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.
- The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

NB Please note that 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 and associated directorate arrangements within their service areas.

- Ensure that appropriate resources are made available for the effective operation of the policy including training.

5.3. Managers will:

- Undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the risks to employees created by exposure to products containing natural rubber latex, including gloves. Risk assessment should be carried out by the line-manager with the responsibility for the work activity and should have received suitable training.

- Reduce the risk by ensuring that gloves are only worn where appropriate e.g. where there is a risk of infection.

- Ensure that non-latex products are utilised where it is practicable to do so. Medical gloves should be vinyl, nitrile, polyisoprene or other synthetic materials.

- Where the risk assessment shows 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 must be provided.

- Where natural rubber latex (NRL) gloves are provided they must be issued to individual employees for personal use only.

- Notify Occupational Health of any employees using latex gloves to allow relevant health surveillance to be undertaken.

- Ensure that where employees use latex gloves they receive appropriate information, instruction and education as to the risks and appropriate control measures associated with natural rubber latex. This would include information on good hygiene practises e.g. washing hands after removing gloves and how to dispose of them.

- Ensure that Occupational Health is notified immediately in the event of any employee using latex gloves suffering a reaction (see section 6 for further details.)

- Ensure that they and their employees comply with this policy and associated Directorate arrangements for managing latex derived from this policy.

5.4. Each employee using latex gloves or working with latex products 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 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.

5.5. The Corporate Health and Safety Unit will:

- Ensure that this policy is reviewed at least annually to ensure it is in line with current legislation.

- Provide advice and information on legislation or guidance relating to latex and latex allergies (in conjunction with the Occupational Health Nurse).

- 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 the Corporate Policy on Latex.

- Ensure the communication of the Corporate Policy and Directorate arrangements to all relevant employees.

- Monitor the effective implementation of the Corporate Policy and Directorate Arrangements.

5.7. The Occupational Health Nurse will where employees use latex products during the course of their work:

- Liaise with managers where their written justification based on risk assessment identifies the use of latex gloves as necessary and authorise the justification if appropriate.

- Should the written justification based on risk assessment show that latex gloves must be worn 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 monitoring.

- Ensure that an annual health questionnaire is conducted either by questionnaire or face-to-face.

- Carry out health surveillance on at risk employees following the annual health surveillance or as a result of a referral from a Manager.

- Ensure sensitised employees and those considered as being at higher risk of developing sensitisation are clinically assessed.

- Liaise with Managers to ensure that employees who use latex products are provided with information and instruction on carrying out skin checks.

- Maintain a record of the health surveillance which must be kept for 40 years.

5.8. The Procurement Section will:

- Only purchase natural rubber latex (NRL) gloves where the manager produces written justification based on a risk assessment

authorised by the Occupational Health Department showing that latex gloves are required.

- Only purchase single use, disposable natural rubber latex gloves which are low-protein (<50mcg/g) and powder free.

6. ARRANGEMENTS

6.1. Natural rubber latex (NRL):

6.1.1 Natural rubber latex (NRL) is a natural product, which is widely used in many medical and consumer items. NRL contains proteins to which some individuals may develop an allergy. There are 2 types of latex allergies, type I and type IV;

6.1.2 Type I Allergic Reaction – This is an immediate allergic reaction to latex proteins and can be potentially life threatening. Sensitisation can occur suddenly after many years of using latex products with no apparent health effects. Symptoms include:

- localised or generalised rash (urticaria or hives),
- inflammation of the mucous membranes in the nose (rhinitis),
- red and swollen eyes with discharge (conjunctivitis)
- asthma like symptoms.
- anaphylactic shock (although rare can lead to loss of consciousness and death.)

6.1.3 Type IV Allergic Reaction – this is known as instant contact dermatitis and is not a true allergy. Symptoms typically occur 6-48 hours after exposure and include:

- red itchy scaly rash often localised to the area of use e.g. wrists and forearms with glove use but may spread to other areas.

6.2. Risk Assessment and Written Justification

6.2.1 Written justification must be provided that latex gloves are needed and this must be based on the risk assessment.

6.2.2 A suitable and sufficient risk assessment must be carried out to consider the risks created by exposure of employees to products containing natural rubber latex (NRL). This is a legal requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

6.2.3 The risk assessment should be task based e.g. consider all activities where latex might be used and should consider service users and employees with known latex allergies and should include safe systems of work to ensure they are treated in a latex-free environment.

6.2.4 Where the written justification based on the risk assessment shows that non-latex alternatives are unsuitable as they increase health and safety risks the Occupational Health Department must be contacted.

6.2.5 The Occupational Health Department will assist the Manager to consider the risks and will authorise the written justification where appropriate.

6.2.6 **Latex gloves must not be used unless a written justification based on the risk assessment has been produced and authorised by the Occupational Health Department and this shows that the alternatives are not suitable. Where latex gloves are issued they must only be issued to individuals identified as needing them following the risk assessment.**

6.3. COSHH Assessments:

6.3.1 Where the risk assessment shows that latex gloves/products are necessary a competent person must carry out a COSHH assessment. This is a requirement under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH). The purpose of the COSHH assessment is to assess the risks to the health of employees working with latex.

6.3.2 Contents of the COSHH Assessment;

- The assessment must take into account the hazardous substances, the person affected, the type and duration of exposure, what current controls are in place and any action needed to control the residual risks e.g. substitution.

- The Authority operates the Sypol system which will generate a COSHH assessment based on the details submitted.

- The Directorate Health and Safety Officer will be able to provide further information and a copy of the relevant. COSHH assessment based on the usage of latex in a particular work area.

6.4. Provision of Information:

6.4.1 Where employees are required to use latex gloves they will be provided with appropriate information, instruction and education as to the risks, appropriate control measures and symptoms of allergy associated with natural rubber latex.

6.5. Pre-Employment Health Screening:

6.5.1 Where an employee will be using latex gloves an assessment of the worker's respiratory health & skin condition must be carried out before they start a relevant job to provide a baseline record.

6.6. Health Surveillance:

6.6.1 For employees using latex gloves a regular (at least annual) enquiry for dermatitis and asthma will be carried out. The enquiry will be carried out by written questionnaire, and positive results will be referred to the Occupational Health Nurse for assessment.

6.6.2 Where employees are known to be sensitised to latex and for those employees considered to be at a high risk of developing sensitisation i.e. atopic individuals, a periodic clinical assessment will be carried out by the Occupational Health Nurse.

6.6.3 A record will be kept of all health surveillance undertaken.

6.6.4 For each group of employees using latex gloves a responsible person will be identified and made known to employees as a contact point for the reporting of any symptoms associated with sensitisation. This person will ensure referral to the Occupational Health Nurse for a clinical assessment where appropriate.

7. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

7.1. This policy must be cross referenced with the following policies:

- Health and Safety Policy Statement

7.2. Guidance

7.2.1. Latex and You – INDG 320 - the Health and Safety Executive.

Appendix 1

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

QUESTIONNAIRE TO IDENTIFY NRL SENSITIVITY

MEDICAL IN CONFIDENCE

SECTION A – PERSONNAL DETAILS

Surname: Forename:

Date of Birth: National Insurance Number:

Home Address:

Postcode: Telephone Number:

Job Applied for/currently held:

Directorate: Location:

SECTION B - PAST MEDICAL HISTORY

1. Do you have a history of any of the following?	YES	NO	Details
Asthma			
Hay Fever			
Hand eczema			
Eczema elsewhere on the body			
2. Have you had any surgery?			*Please give details of the procedure, your age at the time*
3. Have you had any extensive dental work?			
4. Do you have any congenital abnormalities (e.g. spina bifida)			*Type*
5. Do you have any food allergies?			
If Yes, are you allergic to any of the following?			*Please briefly describe the symptoms*
Banana			
Peach			
Pineapple			
Potato			
Avocado			
Kiwi Fruit			
Papaya			
Egg			
Tomato			
Peanut			
Other			

Does your occupation involve frequent contact with items containing natural rubber latex?	YES	NO
Have you had a reaction to any of the following products made from natural rubber latex? *Please tick any that apply*		
Balloons		
Rubber gloves		
Condoms		
Hot water bottles		
Rubber balls		
Rubber bands		
Elastoplast		
Elastic bandages		
Erasers		
Garden hoses		
Other		

If you have answered yes to the last question, please give details of how long after contact and what reaction would you expect to occur?

Please state time against an that apply:

Rash on hands	
Itching	
Urticaria (Hives)	
Runny nose	
Sneezing	
Itchy/watery eyes	
Shortness of breath	
Facial swelling	
Dizziness	
Other	

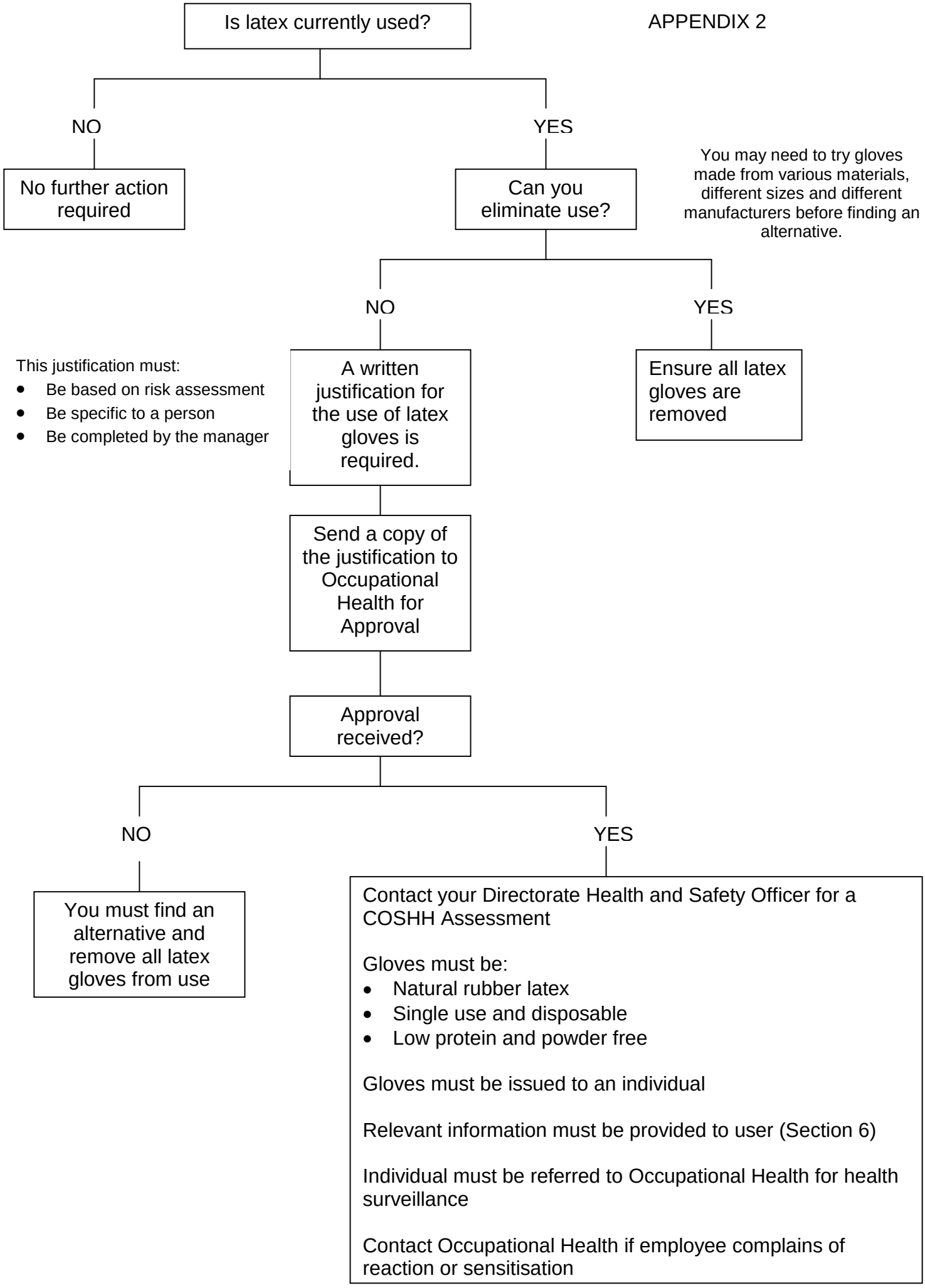
Have you ever suffered from anaphylactic shock? *If so, under what circumstances and how many times?*	YES	NO

Employee Signature: Date:

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Checked by: Date:

APPENDIX 2


Is latex currently used?
NO
YES
No further action required
Can you eliminate use?
You may need to try gloves made from various materials, different sizes and different manufacturers before finding an alternative.
NO
YES
This justification must:
Be based on risk assessment
Be specific to a person
Be completed by the manager
A written justification for the use of latex gloves is required.
Ensure all latex gloves are removed
Send a copy of the justification to Occupational Health for Approval
Approval received?
NO
YES
You must find an alternative and remove all latex gloves from use
Contact your Directorate Health and Safety Officer for a COSHH Assessment
Gloves must be:
Natural rubber latex
Single use and disposable
Low protein and powder free
Gloves must be issued to an individual
Relevant information must be provided to user (Section 6)
Individual must be referred to Occupational Health for health surveillance
Contact Occupational Health if employee complains of reaction or sensitisation