

SURGICAL PLUME: ARE YOU COSHH COMPLIANT?

Many healthcare organisations are unaware that electrosurgical instruments which generate surgical plume (surgical smoke) require Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) to control exposure risks to staff.

Because these extraction systems are often small, mobile or integrated into clinical equipment, they can easily be overlooked in COSHH assessments, risk registers, planned preventative maintenance programmes and LEV testing schedules.

As a result, healthcare providers may be exposing staff to unnecessary risks and creating compliance gaps without realising it.

As a specialist provider of pen testing services in the UK, the IOM can help you stay legally compliant.

WHY IT MATTERS

Electrosurgical procedures used in open surgery, endoscopy and colposcopy can generate surgical plume containing a mixture of airborne contaminants.

Exposure to surgical plume has been associated with a range of health concerns, including:

Respiratory effects

Exposure may cause irritation of the eyes and airways and has been linked to asthma and asthma-like symptoms.

Exposure to hazardous substances

Diathermy fume can contain fine particulate matter and a range of potentially harmful chemicals.

Potential biological hazards

Research has identified concerns regarding the possible transmission of human papillomavirus (HPV) through surgical smoke exposure.

Long-term health concerns

Some components of surgical plume have been identified as having potentially carcinogenic properties.

WHAT DOES COSHH REQUIRE?

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) require employers to adequately control exposure to hazardous substances.

All diathermy surgical tools require LEV to control surgical plume. Healthcare organisations should ensure that systems are:

- Suitable for the task and used correctly
- Maintained in efficient working order
- Included within maintenance and compliance programmes
- Thoroughly examined and tested at least once every 14 months
- Supported by appropriate staff training

To achieve long-term compliance, surgical plume extraction systems should be included within:

- COSHH assessments
- Risk registers
- Planned preventative maintenance (PPM) schedules
- LEV testing programmes
- Staff training programmes

HOW WE CAN HELP

IOM provides specialist testing of surgical plume extraction systems to help healthcare organisations protect staff and demonstrate compliance with COSHH requirements.

Our experienced occupational hygiene and LEV specialists can identify overlooked systems, assess performance and carry out thorough examination and testing as part of a standalone service or alongside wider COSHH and LEV compliance inspections.

We are trusted by NHS estates teams, facilities managers and private healthcare providers across the UK to help maintain safe, compliant healthcare environments.

SYSTEMS WE CAN TEST

Our service covers the testing of extraction systems associated with:

- Mono pencil
- Hand-held tubing
- Monopolar forceps
- Bipolar forceps
- Passive cannula port
- Active cannula port
- Electrostatic wand
- Vaginal speculum
- Hand-held pencil

Training on the effective use of surgical smoke control systems is also available through our partners at Surgivex.

UNSURE WHETHER YOUR SURGICAL SMOKE EXTRACTION SYSTEMS ARE COMPLIANT?

Talk to IOM about a surgical plume compliance review and ensure your LEV programme covers all relevant systems.

Protect your staff. Maintain compliance. Avoid overlooked risks.

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