

Acidic and corrosive products sales to young people

Trading Standards information

www.southwark.gov.uk

1. Introduction

New laws prohibit the sale of certain corrosive products to under 18s and deliveries of such products.

These were introduced because of an increase in attack incidents that resulted in serious harm or life changing injuries to targeted victims. Police statistics indicated that teenagers caused a significant number of the attacks.

Local retailers now need to be pro-active to prevent illegal sales to children under 18 and must not deliver them to residential only addresses or delivery lockers.

2. Types of products concerned

Examples of more common products that contain acidic or other corrosive substances are listed below:

- Cleaners / unblockers containing **sulfuric acid** (over 15% concentration)
- Paint strippers, oven cleaners / unblockers containing **sodium hydroxide** (over 12%)
- Brick, patio and other cleaners or limescale removers containing **hydrochloric acid** (over 10%)
- Bleaching and other products containing **sodium hypochlorite** (over 10%)
- Cleaning and other products containing **ammonium hydroxide** (over 10%)
- Cleaners, rust removers and other products containing **phosphoric acid** (over 70%)

Products with nitric acid (3%), formic acid (10%) and hydrofluoric acid (any %) are also age restricted.

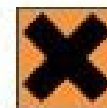
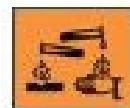
Look out for these mandatory warning signs on products that could help identify the high risk items.



Causes severe skin burns and eye damage



Harmful skin irritation, serious eye irritation



Old warning signs being phased out

You must also comply with separate poisons and explosives precursors laws that apply to some of these products (see section 5 on next page for more details).

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3. Age verification policy - Challenge 25

It is best practice to adopt a 'Challenge 25' policy for the sales of these products. Challenge 25 is an effective way of ensuring that age restricted products are not sold to under 18s and are already well established in shops that sell alcohol, knives and tobacco.

Just asking someone how old they are is never good enough. Challenge 25 means that when any customers who appear to be below 25 years of age attempt to buy such substances, they are politely asked to show suitable proof of age so that you can actually verify that they are over 18 years old.

We can supply Challenge 25 posters and other guidance if you require it or you can download it from our business and compliance advice web pages.

Always be wary of suspicious behaviour by anyone attempting to purchase these products and if you have concerns report it to the Police immediately.

4. Staff training and refusals

For Challenge 25 to work effectively it is essential for staff to be aware of the acceptable forms of proof of age (i.e. Passport, Driving Licence or PASS approved proof of age cards). An updated Proof of Age information leaflet is available from Trading Standards.

Staff also need the skills to refuse sales whilst avoiding conflict. We have guidance on this issue and can also provide free refusals registers to ensure records of refusals are kept. This will also provide proof that staff have followed training in refusing sales of age-restricted products.

5. Poisons and explosives precursors legislation

Members of the general public wishing to purchase products containing over 15% sulphuric acid or 3% nitric acid must be refused unless they can show they hold an EPP licence under the Control of Poisons and Explosives Precursors Regulations 2015.

Many popular drain cleaners and unblockers contain over 15% sulphuric acid so it would be best to keep such products secured behind the counter or out of sight. This will help you make sure sales are made only to trade or business professionals or EPP licence holders.

Note that it is an offence for retailers to supply sulphuric or nitric acid in this concentration to a member of the general public without first verifying a valid licence is held. You must also enter the details of the transaction in the licence, and ensure that a warning label is affixed to the packaging, indicating that it is an offence for members of the general public to acquire, possess or use the substance in question without a licence (or recognised non-GB licence).

Hydrochloric acid (over 10%), sodium hydroxide (over 12%) and phosphoric acid are all reportable poisons for suspicious transactions, disappearances and thefts. For further guidance on these controls see the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) guidance on supplying explosives precursors and poisons.

6. Further information

Visit the [Business Companion website](https://www.business-companion.gov.uk) for full information. If you would like extra advice on measures you can take to assist in the age restrictive sales of corrosive substances, please contact us.