Better Equipped®

COSHH Cabinet Buying Guide

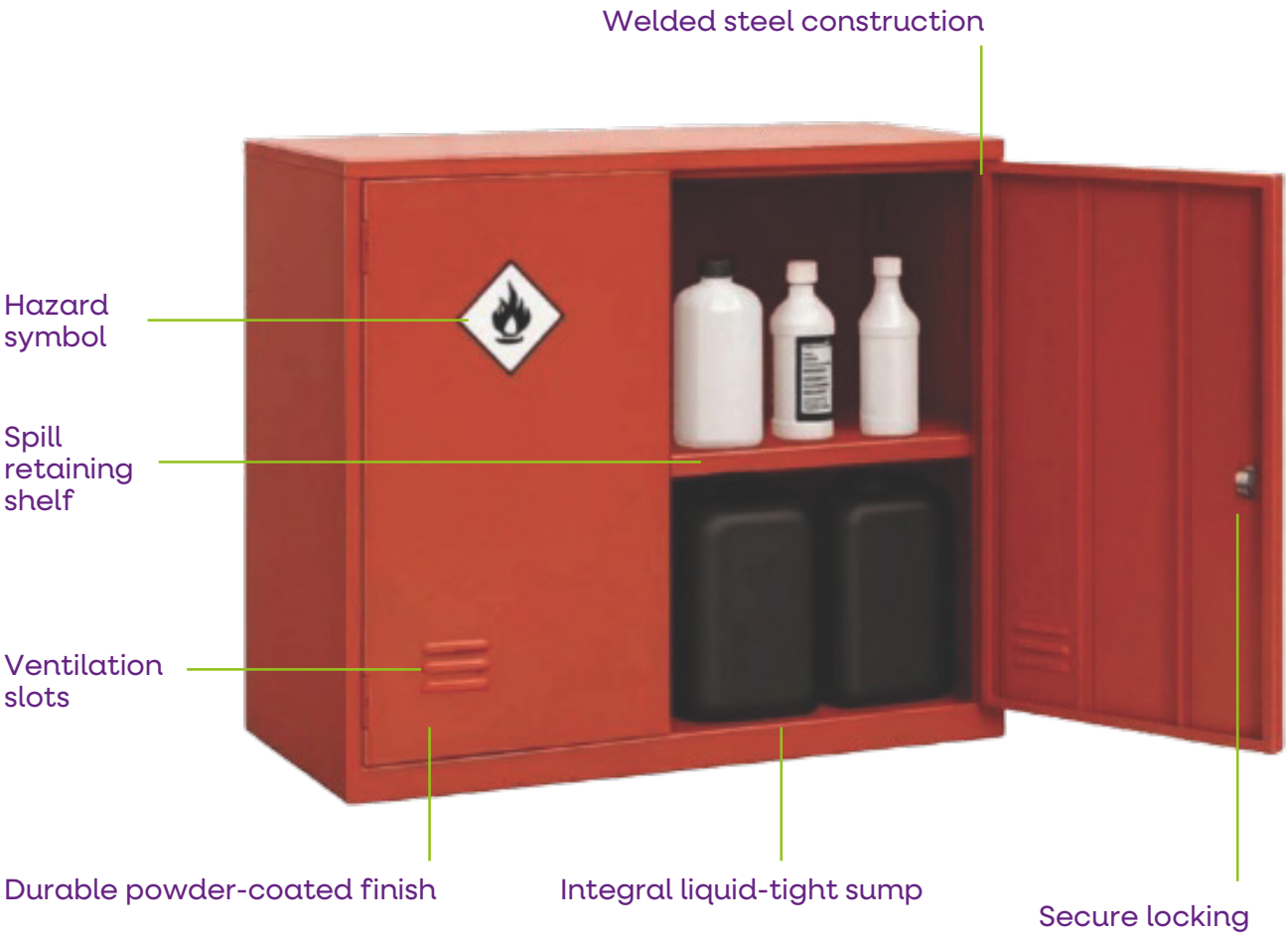
An essential guide to help you be better informed when purchasing COSSH Cabinets.

COSHH cabinets *(Control of Substances Hazardous to Health)* **are essential for safely storing chemicals, flammables, corrosives, and hazardous substances in schools, laboratories, workshops, and industrial environments.**

Although the cabinets may appear similar, choosing the right one requires understanding regulations, construction materials, ventilation needs, internal layout, and chemical compatibility.

This guide breaks down everything you should know before purchasing.

COSHH Cabinet Components



1. Identify Your Primary Use Case

Start by deciding where and why you'll use the cabinet. Different settings have different compliance and durability needs.

Environment	Requirements
School/Teaching Labs	Clearly labelled cabinets; robust steel construction; adjustable shelves; secure locking systems to restrict student access **Click to view our range**
Research/Professional Labs	Higher capacity; corrosion-resistant interiors; optional extract ventilation; segregation of incompatible chemicals.
Workshops / Engineering Departments	Durable welded steel; spill-retaining shelves; scratch-resistant powder coating.
Industrial / Chemical Handling Areas	Large-capacity units; specialised cabinets for flammables, acids, or pesticides; heavy-duty sump trays; compliance with strict safety standards.

2. Understand the Types of COSHH Cabinets

Not all hazardous substances can be safely stored together. Choose cabinets based on the materials you handle.

General Hazardous Substance Cabinets

Yellow colour, COSHH-labelled

For paints, oils, cleaning chemicals, solvents (non-flammable), and general hazardous liquids

Most common in schools and workshops

Flammable Storage Cabinets

Often supplied in bright yellow with flame-proof labelling

Designed to store flammable liquids (e.g. ethanol, acetone, toluene)

Built with fire-resistant construction and sealed sump trays

Acid & Corrosive Cabinets

Typically blue or white

Interior coatings or liners resist corrosion

Shelves may be plastic-lined or polypropylene for chemical compatibility

Pesticide or Agrochemical Cabinets

Red cabinet colour

Ventilation options to prevent vapour build-up
Secure locking for restricted chemical access

Important: Never store acids, alkalis, and flammables in the same cabinet unless specifically designed for segregation.

3. Construction Materials & Durability

Material quality affects durability, corrosion resistance, and heat tolerance.

Recommended Features:

Welded steel construction
Strong, long-lasting, minimises leak points

Durable powder-coated finish
Resists chemical splashes

Reinforced doors
Prevent warping, ensure consistent sealing

Spill-retaining shelves
Capture minor leaks before they reach lower levels

Integral liquid-tight sump
Catches major spills; must remain unobstructed

Avoid:

Riveted or thin steel panels (less robust & more prone to corrosion)
Cabinets without sump trays
Shelves that are not easily removable or adjustable

Please note: Better Equipped's range of high quality, UK manufactured COSHH Cabinets are manufactured in 20 gauge mild steel with welded seams. They are fitted with reinforced non combustible doors, with high melting point hinges, and lockable "L" handle with 2 point locking system (2 keys are supplied). All Cabinets have a 30 minute fire rating. They come with adjustable shelves which act as a spillage tray for minor spills and are adjustable in 25mm increments. The cabinets have an internal spillage sump built into the base of the unit which is not removable. The Cabinets are finished in a specialist polyester powder coat and have warning signs on doors. Additional shelves & stands are also available.

Click to view our range

4. Ventilation Considerations

Most COSHH cabinets are designed for passive storage – not as extraction units. However, ventilation may be necessary when vapour build-up is a risk.

- **No ventilation (standard)**
  Suitable for most general chemicals
- **Vent ports with optional fans or filters**
  Used where chemical odours or vapours require management
- **Ducted extraction upgrades**
  For industrial or high-hazard substances

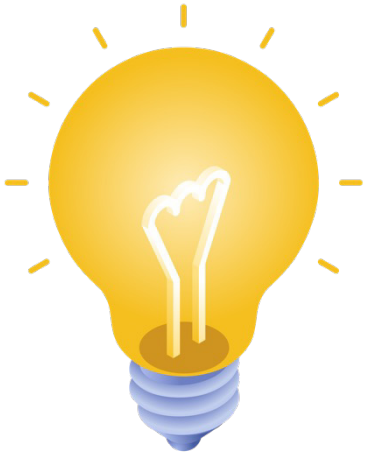
Only ventilate if required;
venting can compromise fire protection or cabinet integrity unless designed for it.

5. Size, Capacity & Internal Layout

Common Options:

- **Wall-mounted cabinets**
  Ideal for small teaching labs or bench-level access
- **Under-bench cabinets**
  Good for flammables near workstations
- **Tall upright cabinets**
  High capacity; adjustable shelves for larger containers
- **Mobile COSHH cabinets**
  Used in maintenance or engineering workshops

Consider:



- **Number of shelves**
- **Whether shelves can be removed to fit tall bottles**
- **Weight capacity** (especially for industrial containers)
- **Door configuration** (single, double, sliding)

6. Labelling & Compliance

Check for:

- ☐ A COSHH cabinet must be clearly identifiable and compliant with relevant regulations.
- ☐ Conspicuous hazard symbols (GHS/CLP)
- ☐ COSHH warning labels
- ☐ Clear signage for flammables, corrosives, or general hazards
- ☐ Manufacturer compliance declaration or safety statement
- ☐ Ensure the chemicals stored inside match the cabinet
- ☐ Labelling - inspectors will check this

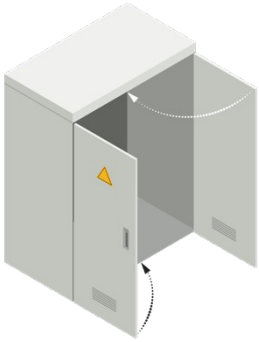
7. Security and Locking systems

Keeping hazardous substances secure is mandatory in many settings.

Keyed locking mechanisms
Standard for most cabinets

Padlockable latches
Good for shared facilities
or supervised areas

Reinforced lock housings
Prevent forced entry



Reinforced doors
20 gauge mild steel
Non combustible with 30 min. fire rating

8. Ease of Maintenance

A well-designed cabinet makes cleaning and upkeep straightforward.

Look for:

- ☐ Smooth, powder-coated surfaces for easy wiping
- ☐ Removable, spill-retaining shelves
- ☐ Accessible sump area for cleaning (never store items in the sump)
- ☐ Corrosion-resistant hinges and fittings
- ☐ Door seals that are easy to inspect and replace

Avoid cabinets with complex internal structures that trap spills.

9. Buying Checklist

Before purchasing, make sure you confirm:

☐1. Compliance & Certification

- Cabinet is labelled for COSHH hazardous-substance storage
- Meets relevant UK/EU standards (e.g. COSHH Regs, BS EN 14470 1 for flammables)
- UKCA/CE marking present
- Chemical hazard signage included (flammable, toxic, corrosive, oxidising, etc.)

☐2. Construction & Build Quality

- Robust steel construction, fully welded (not riveted)
- Corrosion resistant powder coating
- Doors operate smoothly and close fully
- Integrated spill retaining shelves
- Leak proof sump (not directly connected to drains)

☐3. Size, Capacity & Layout

- Capacity suitable for all chemical containers
- Adjustable shelves included
- Shelf load rating adequate
- Enough vertical clearance for larger containers
- Separate storage areas for incompatible chemical classes (if needed)

☐4. Chemical Compatibility

- Cabinet material is compatible with stored substances
- Supplier provides chemical compatibility guidance
- Separate storage available for acids, alkalis, flammables, oxidisers, etc.
- No reactive chemicals stored together

☐5. Ventilation & Extraction

- Ventilation required? (depends on SDS for each chemical)
- Cabinet has sealed ventilation ports
- Safe connection options for ducted or recirculating filtration
- Ventilation does not compromise fire rating (critical for flammable cabinets)

9. Buying Checklist

☐6. Fire Protection *(if storing flammables)*

- Fire rating clearly stated (e.g. 30 min or 90 min per BS EN 14470 1)
- Fire resistant construction and insulation

☐7. Safety & Security

- Lockable doors (key, padlock, or digital lock)
- Clearly visible hazard signage
- Internal lighting (if applicable) is intrinsically safe
- Anti tip design or ability to anchor to wall/floor

☐8. Spill & Leak Management

- Sump capacity meets requirements (110% of largest container OR 25% total volume stored)
- Sump is easily accessible for cleaning
- Shelves designed to trap spills
- Absorbent materials available nearby

☐9. Documentation & Supplier Support

- Supplier provides COSHH cabinet specification sheet
- Warranty included
- Replacement parts available (shelves, filters, locks)
- Installation guidance provided
- Chemical storage guidance provided

☐10. Location & Installation

- Positioned away from heat sources and ignition sources
- Installed on level floor
- Adequate access space for opening doors
- Clear evacuation pathways (cabinet not blocking routes)
- Adequate ventilation in room
- Correct signage for the area