

# > Quick Guide Approved Handlers

(Dangerous Goods  
and Scheduled Toxic  
Substances)

Preventing or managing risk to people and the environment

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996 covers the safe management of all hazardous substances. This includes those that are explosive, flammable, corrosive, toxic and harmful to the environment (ecotoxic).

This guide specifically relates to Dangerous Goods and Scheduled Toxic Substances that were transferred to the HSNO Act on 1 April 2004.

The HSNO Act requires that very hazardous substances are under the control of an Approved Handler. In addition, the sale, transfer and use of some of the most hazardous substances need to be recorded or 'tracked'. To take delivery of a tracked substance you will need to ensure that an Approved Handler is in place. This guide explains the role of an Approved Handler and how to become one.

## Who is an Approved Handler?

An Approved Handler is a person who is competent and certified to handle certain hazardous substances. To become an Approved Handler you must meet the requirements of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (Personnel Qualifications) Regulations 2001. It is an easy process, particularly if you have handled the substances before.

## What are the responsibilities of an Approved Handler?

An Approved Handler must make sure certain hazardous substances are handled safely, and that they do not cause harm to people, nor damage to the environment. The Approved Handler will also be expected to provide guidance to other people handling the substances, who are not Approved Handlers, and be available to assist them if needed.

## Where is an Approved Handler required?

An Approved Handler is only required for the most hazardous substances. This is determined by the hazard classification of the substance and the amount being used.

ERMA New Zealand has produced a series of Compliance Guides for some of the main industries affected. These can be found on our website at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/compliance-pubs.asp](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/compliance-pubs.asp).

## How do I find the hazard classification?

The Hazardous Substance Register<sup>2</sup> or Transfer Documents<sup>1</sup> tell you the classification of the substance. The HSNO control regulations tell you the amount you have to store and/or use before an Approved Handler is needed.

You will need to look up the individual substances to identify the specific controls required.

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<sup>1</sup> Hazardous Substance Register, Transfer Documents and new substance approvals [www.ermanz.govt.nz/search/registers.html](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/search/registers.html)

<sup>2</sup> Hazardous Substances (Classes 1 to 5 Controls) Regulations 2001, and the Hazardous Substances (Classes 1 to 5 Controls) Amendment Regulations 2004

## My industry has never needed a licence before!

The HSNO Act has introduced the need for an Approved Handler Test Certificate in many areas where specific qualifications have not been needed before. This is particularly so for flammable, oxidising and toxic substances. However, having people trained to handle hazardous substances has always been a requirement of the law. The HSNO legislation is formalising this requirement where the most hazardous substances are used.

## When is an Approved Handler not needed?

Not everyone handling these very hazardous substances needs to be an Approved Handler. Any person may handle a hazardous substance if an Approved Handler:

- has provided guidance to the person actually handling the substance; and
- is 'available' to provide assistance at all times while the substance is being handled.

'Available' in some instances means present at the location, in others it may be sufficient for them to be contacted quickly and if not on site be available, for example, via telephone. If an Approved Handler is needed because of the corrosive, toxic or ecotoxic properties of the substance then they must be present at the location.

The Approved Handler need not be present if the substance is not in use and secured so that a person cannot gain access without a key or similar device.

The transportation of packaged hazardous substances by road does not require an Approved Handler provided the Land Transport Rules are complied with, and the driver has a dangerous goods (D) endorsement on their driver licence. For rail, sea and air transport similar exceptions apply if a person has undergone recognised training in those industries.

## What are the transitional arrangements?

### → Transitional Certificate (Temporary)

If you have been handling a hazardous substance (or substances with similar hazards) under previous legislation you can obtain a transitional certificate<sup>3</sup>. You must have been working with the substance for two consecutive years since July 1999, and will need to satisfy a Test Certifier that you are competent, and have the necessary experience and knowledge to obtain the certificate. All transitional certificates will expire on 31 December 2006 and you will need to obtain a full test certificate by then.

## What do I need to know to get a full certificate?

You will need to demonstrate your knowledge, experience and competence. The detail is found in the regulations<sup>4</sup>, but in plain terms this means:

### → Knowledge of the substances

You will be expected to know the following specific things about the substances you wish to handle:

- the hazards of the substances and how to prevent harm to people and damage to the environment; and
- what to do in an emergency.

### → Practical experience and knowledge

You will need to have sufficient experience to be able to demonstrate you are competent to handle the substance, the operating equipment, and know about the protective clothing and safety equipment required.

### → Knowledge of HSNO

You will need to know some basic facts about the HSNO Act, mainly related to enforcement issues, and what the law is trying to achieve. Also you will need to know:

- the HSNO classifications and regulations that apply to the substances;
- any codes of practice that apply to the substances.

<sup>3</sup>Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (Personnel Qualifications) Regulations 2001, Regulation 6

<sup>4</sup>Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (Personnel Qualifications) Regulations 2001, Regulations 4 & 5

## How long does a certificate last?

A transitional certificate will last until 31 December 2006. A 'full' certificate is valid for five years from the date of issue.

## What will I have to do to renew a certificate?

All renewals will be for a 'full' test certificate. The application process will be straight forward but depends on the type of certificate you hold:

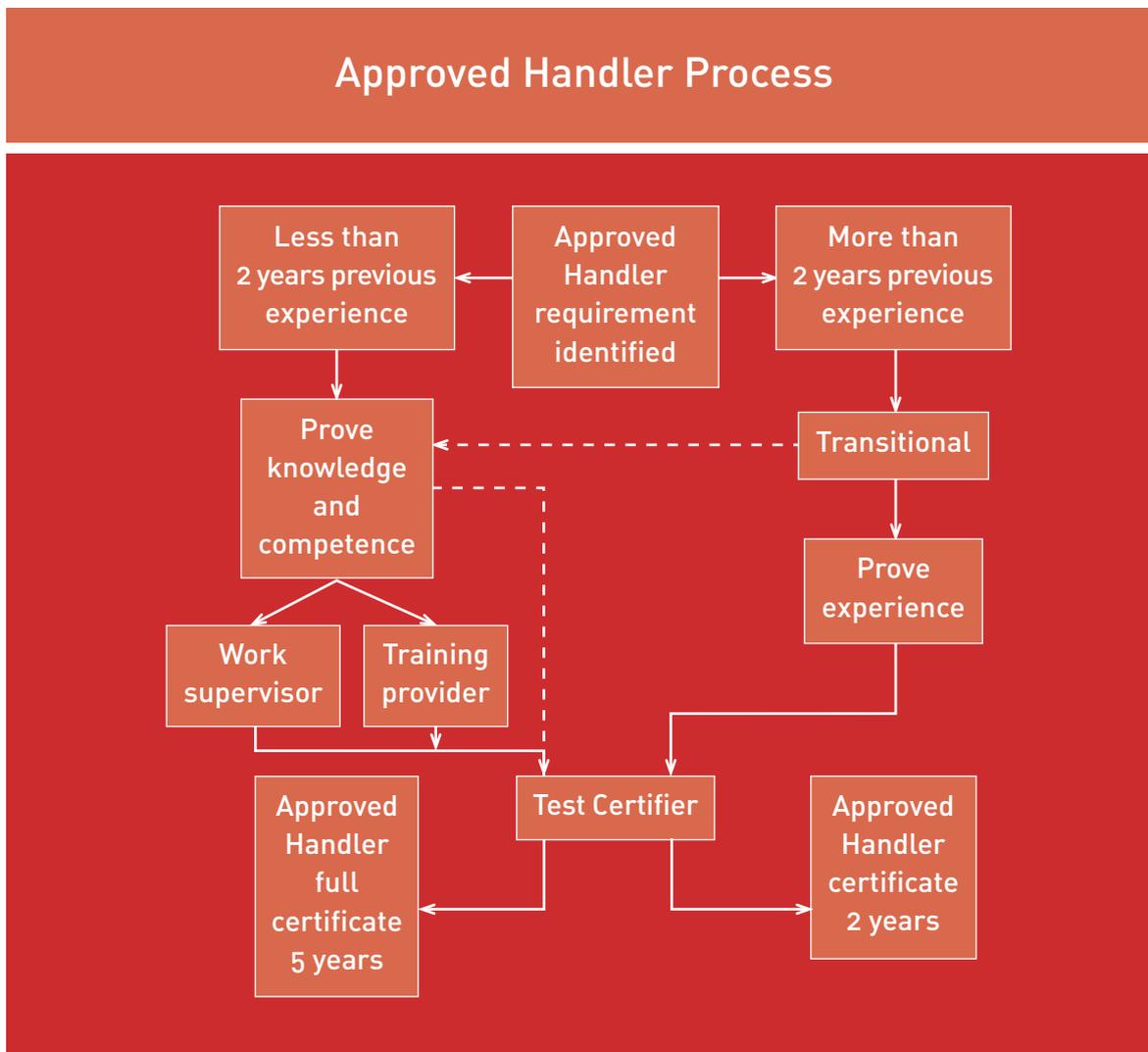
- **Transitional** – you will need to prove that you understand the specific HSNO items that were not covered by your transitional certificate, mainly knowledge of the legislation. You will also have to prove that you are up-to-date with current best practice, new codes of practice, and any new and relevant laws. You will then receive a full certificate.
- **Full** – at the end of the five year period all you will need to prove is that you are up-to-date with any changes to the law or codes of practice.

## How do I get the Approved Handler certificate?

Full Approved Handler certificates are obtained from a Test Certifier. Test Certifiers are individuals approved by ERMA New Zealand to issue certificates in their area of competency.

→ The process

The diagram below shows the two ways you can become an Approved Handler.



## Where do I find a Test Certifier?

A list of Test Certifiers is on the website at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/search/test-cert-reg.asp](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/search/test-cert-reg.asp) or you can contact us and request a list be sent to you. You may select any Test Certifier from the list who is certified for the substances you are responsible for.

## What will I have to provide to a Test Certifier?

For a transitional Test Certificate use the form on the website to help you provide the information needed by the Test Certifier - [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/dangerous-goods/transitional-approved-handler.asp](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/dangerous-goods/transitional-approved-handler.asp).

For a full Test Certificate the Test Certifier will need evidence of your qualifications and experience/competence in either or both of the following ways:

- **Training providers** – if you have completed a training course that covers all or part of these requirements you can provide the qualification you gain from the course.
- **Work supervisors** – if you have been trained at work or ‘on-the-job’ a supervisor or manager from your organisation can provide evidence for you.

Whichever way, or combination of ways you choose, the evidence you provide must describe how your knowledge and skills were assessed and the results of that assessment.

A Test Certifier may not need to see an Approved Handler applicant. In most cases an application can be handled satisfactorily by mail provided all the necessary evidence has been made available to the Test Certifier. You should discuss these requirements with your chosen Test Certifier.

## Where can I get training?

There are a number of training providers who cover the hazardous substances legislation. Often this may be in conjunction with Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) or other industry groups. Some organisations who provide Approved Handler training are listed on our web site at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/hs-comp-test-certifiers.asp#approvedhandlers](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/hs/hs-comp-test-certifiers.asp#approvedhandlers).

## Further information

Visit our website at [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz), contact us on 0800 376 234 (HS Compliance Line), or email [dginfo@ermanz.govt.nz](mailto:dginfo@ermanz.govt.nz).

Additional compliance publications including Compliance Guides and Quick Guides are available at [www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/compliance-pubs.asp](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/compliance-pubs.asp).

## Contact details



PO BOX 131 Wellington

Phone: +64 4 916 2426 Fax: +64 4 914 0433

Email: [info@ermanz.govt.nz](mailto:info@ermanz.govt.nz)

Website: [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz)