



# Sawmill campaign success

**HSE's 18-month sawmill campaign has now come to an end and we have achieved our target of a 10% reduction in the number of fatal and major accidents in the industry.**

The campaign was launched in October 1997 because fatal and major accident rates for sawmilling were about four times worse than in the wood industry as a whole. Nineteen people were killed between 1985 and 1995.

Inspectors have been visiting sawmills all over the country paying particular attention to band saw blade or pulley cleaning procedures, round and sawn timber stacking, guarding of power-operated cross-cut saws, welfare facilities, noise reduction and control, and management of site transport activities. Also, at the larger mills they have looked at systems of work for interrupting mechanised production processes, for example freeing jammed timber.

During the campaign, inspectors made 929 site inspections and served 192 enforcement notices. Fifty-one of these were prohibition notices stopping the particular work activity

immediately because of the serious risk of injury. The rest were improvement notices giving a time limit in which to make improvements or the business would be prosecuted.

There have been 13 prosecutions with fines totalling more than £40 000. The cases involved cleaning moving band saw blades, not keeping pedestrians away from moving vehicles, untrained fork-lift operators, machinery guarding deficiencies and poor maintenance procedures.

Over 50% of all sawmills visited had a copy of *Health and safety in sawmilling* (HSG172 ISBN 0 7176 1402 6, Price £10.00, available from HSE Books, Tel: 01787 881165). This guide was produced with the valuable help and assistance of the sawmilling industry. Many mill managers told inspectors they had made improvements to reduce health and safety risks as a result of reading the guidance.

Inspectors will continue to visit sawmills as part of their normal inspection programme. Let's hope standards continue to improve.

## — TIME IS RUNNING OUT.. —

### Review your year 2000 programme

By the time you get this edition of **WOODNIG NEWS** there will be about 120 days left to the Millennium, and fewer than 90 working days. If you have not yet begun to tackle the health and safety risk from the Millennium Bug, it is still not too late, as long as you start today!

HSE recently launched a sixth guidance publication on the Year 2000 problem, entitled *Year 2000 assessment: a review framework* (full details on back page). It provides

a framework and lists criteria to help organisations review and assess the effectiveness of their Year 2000 programme.

HSE inspectors have, where appropriate, been raising awareness of the Year 2000 problem (see Issue 12 of **WOODNIG NEWS**). Further visits are now being carried out to assess what action has been taken. Details of the other five Year 2000 publications produced by HSE can be obtained from HSE Books, Tel: 01787 881165.

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# MANUAL HANDLING INJURIES - 'A PAIN IN THE BACK'

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Manual handling injuries are the largest single kind of reported injury in the woodworking industry - about 30% of all reported injuries every year. There has been a steady rise in the number of these injuries reported over the last three years, rising to 858 (provisional figure) in 1997/98.

Handling injuries are not just back and muscle strains. In 1996/97 the main types of injuries reported were strains and sprains (48%); lacerations (16%); and fractures (12%). There are twice as many laceration injuries during manual handling operations in woodworking as there are in industry generally. This is probably because of the necessity to frequently handle sharp cutter blocks and saw blades during tool changing - these tools are often heavy and awkward to grasp. Handling roughly sawn timber leads to cuts and splinters. Fractures are also more common than in other industries, though strains appear to be less common.

HSE is carrying out work to identify common problem areas and solutions, including a follow-up survey of reported handling injuries in two HSE regions. Preliminary investigations suggest that the key high-risk handling tasks and processes include:

- manual loading and feeding of board products (fibreboard, chipboard etc) on machines, eg loading large panels onto beam panel saws;
- handling large jigs, particularly those for CNC machines;
- tool changing;
- handling large, heavy or cumbersome products and workpieces, eg fire doors, pallets, large planks etc; and
- the use of hand-held tools, particularly orbital sanders, paint guns and nail/staple guns.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 lay down a clear hierarchy of measures that employers must take:

- 1 Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable.
- 2 Assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided.
- 3 Reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable.

There are many simple and practicable solutions to the industry's handling problems. These include using vacuum panel lifters; extension tables, conveyors and panel trolleys; carrying aids (hooks, handles etc) for large panels and saw blades. It is important to rotate the workforce to vary tasks and reduce the risk of injury; and to provide adequate manual handling training.

Manual handling risks were publicised in HSE's ongoing *Good Health is Good Business* campaign. The processes/tasks listed above will be given priority attention during inspections. So use this article as an early warning to get control of handling risks in your workplace.

Further information can be found in the following publications:

*Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992. Guidance on Regulations L23*  
HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 2415 3 (£8.00)

*Manual handling - Solutions you can handle HSG115*  
HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0693 7 (£7.95)

*Getting to grips with manual handling INDG143*  
HSE Books 1993 (free for single copies)

*If the task fits - Ergonomics at work INDG90*  
HSE Books 1994 (free for single copies)

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## HSE and the Internet

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HSE's WOODNIG now has a page on the HSE web site.

It includes text from the majority of HSE's free woodworking information sheets, copies of previous editions of **WOODNIG NEWS** and information on HSE's key priorities in woodworking. We are also planning to publish the minutes from meetings of the Wood Industries Forum on the WOODNIG's page.

The web site address is

**<http://www.open.gov.uk/hse/hsehome.htm>**

When at the web site, input wood sector in the search box to the right of the home page. From the list, select 'Agriculture and Wood Sector' to be taken to our page.

The web site is still being developed and other features, including the electronic ordering of priced publications, will be available shortly. We will keep you updated in future editions of **WOODNIG NEWS**.

# WOODWORKING MACHINERY SUPPLIER PROSECUTED

A woodworking machinery supply company was recently prosecuted and fined £2000 plus costs for failure to comply with the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992. The charge related to an American-made automatic pallet assembly machine which the company had supplied to a Cheshire-based firm. The suppliers pleaded guilty to an offence under regulation 12(1)(a) which makes it an offence to supply machinery unless it satisfies the relevant essential health and safety requirements (EHSRs).

The machine was supplied with unguarded chain drive sprockets which presented a dangerous in-running nip. The machine was 'CE' marked and supplied with an EC Declaration of Conformity. While there had not been an accident on this machine, the supplier had been given detailed advice by HSE on machinery that presented similar hazards. Serious injuries can and do occur when parts of the body or clothing become entangled in unguarded transmission drives.

The EHSRs require all moving parts of machinery to be designed, built and laid out to avoid hazards or, where hazards persist, fixed with guards or protective devices in such a way as to prevent all risk of contact which could lead to accidents. The company that had bought the machine ended up fitting their own fixed guards to the chain sprocket area at a cost of £128.

**Suppliers** should note that it is not acceptable to offer necessary safety features, such as guards, as priced optional extras. They should be supplied as standard and included in the machine cost. **Users and purchasers of machinery** need to be alert to the fact that even when machinery carries the 'CE' marking and comes with an EC Declaration of Conformity, it must still be checked for obvious faults before being put into use. **Employers** have a specific duty to do exactly this under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER).

Further information can be found in the following publications:

*Supplying new machinery* INDG270 HSE Books 1998 (free for single copies)

*Product standards - Machinery: A guide to the UK Regulations (May 1995)* HMSO/DTI URN 95/650 available free from the DTI Business in Europe Hotline  
Tel: 0117 944 4888

*Buying new machinery* INDG271 HSE Books 1998 (free for single copies)

## New drive to prevent worker ill health from chemicals

HSE recently launched radical new guidance to help stop workers becoming ill from working with chemicals.

*COSHH essentials: easy steps to control chemicals* uses a simple checklist approach to help firms cut through the complexity of assessing the risks associated with working with chemicals and identify action to protect workers.

The *COSHH essentials* package was developed after the results of a survey indicated that those without in-house expertise, and especially small firms, needed help to implement the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 (COSHH) - the main legal

duty for employers to prevent ill health from use of chemicals at work. It has been produced through collaboration between employers, trade unions and health and safety professionals.

The *COSHH essentials* pack includes a step-by-step guide to identify the right controls to reduce exposure and 60 illustrated control guidance sheets showing how to apply good practice controls. It is aimed particularly at small firms.

For details of how to obtain *COSHH essentials* see the 'New publications from HSE' feature on the back page.

## LESSONS TO BE LEARNT?

A 17-year-old labourer at a re-sawing mill suffered major injuries when he was caught by a sweep auger in the base of a **woodwaste extraction silo**. His left arm was amputated above the elbow and his left leg was broken in three places.

The accident occurred during **annual maintenance** of the extraction equipment. Two men entered the silo with the auger running and while they tried to clear wood chips and shavings from the corners, one slipped and became trapped in the moving auger.

A risk assessment for the operation had not been carried out; the company failed to ensure the men had been trained to carry out the work safely; and no measures were in place to prevent access to dangerous machinery. The isolator for the extraction silo was 50 m away and there was no emergency stop control in the silo. The company was prosecuted and found guilty for these failings. They were fined a total of £30 000 plus costs of £3639.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (regulation 3) require employers to assess risks to employees to identify what needs to be done to comply with health and safety legislation. The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (regulations 9 and 11) require that employees receive adequate training, and that effective measures are in place to stop the movement of dangerous machinery before a person enters a danger zone.

Useful publications from HSE Books include *Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992. Approved Code of Practice* (L21 ISBN 0 7176 0412 8) and *Safe use of work equipment. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance* (L22 ISBN 0 7176 1626 6).

## Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995.

HSE priced publications are also available from good booksellers.

For other enquiries ring HSE's InfoLine Tel: 0541 545500, or write to HSE's Information Centre, Broad Lane, Sheffield S3 7HQ.

HSE home page on the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.open.gov.uk/hse/hsehome.htm>

## NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM HSE

Details of recently produced HSE publications which may be of interest to the woodworking industry are listed below.

*Welfare at work - Guidance for employers on welfare provisions* INDG293 HSE Books 1999 (free)

*COSHH essentials: easy steps to control chemicals* HSG193 HSE Books 1999 ISBN 0 7176 2412 8 (£15.00)

*COSHH Regulations 1999 - General COSHH ACOP and Carcinogens ACOP and Biological Agents ACOP* (revised) L5 HSE Books 1999 ISBN 0 7176 1670 3 (£8.50)

*Simple guide to the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998* INDG291 HSE Books 1999 (free for single copies)

*Simple guide to the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998* INDG290 HSE Books 1999 (free for single copies)

*Year 2000 assessment: a review framework* INDG292 HSE Books 1999 (free)

*Occupational exposure limits 1999* Guidance Note EH40/99 HSE Books 1999 ISBN 0 7176 1660 6 (£8.50)

*COSHH: a brief guide to the regulations: what you need to know about COSHH '99* INDG136(rev1) HSE Books 1999 (free for single copies)

*The complete idiot's guide to CHIP* INDG181(rev1) HSE Books 1999 (free for single copies)

*Basic advice on first aid at work* (revised) INDG215(rev2) HSE Books 1999 (free for single copies)

*Reducing error and influencing behaviour* HSG48 HSE Books 1999 ISBN 0 7176 2452 8 (£11.50)

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What do you think of **WOODNIG NEWS**?  
What would you like to see in future editions?  
Send your views to Chris Molde at the address below.

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