

Protect your hearing!

Are you or your staff wearing ear protection properly? Do you know why, when and how it should be worn?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published updated guidance on ear protection which aims to answer these questions for employers and employees.

Controlling and reducing noise at source is the most effective means of reducing exposure levels and HSE has also produced free Woodworking Information Sheets providing guidance on this. Ear protection is often relied on to safeguard workers' hearing, but it should be considered only as a last resort.

However, where it is used, it is essential that it is worn correctly or it will not be effective. HSE's revised guidance on ear protection will help employers and employees do what they need to do to protect their hearing. Copies are included with this issue of **WOODNIG NEWS**.

For employers, the leaflet *Ear protection: Employers' duties explained* outlines their legal duties on providing ear protection and the types of protection available. It advises on how to give proper instruction and training in its correct use and how to ensure it is properly worn and maintained.

For employees, the pocket card *Protect your hearing!* gives information about when to wear ear protection, the importance of maintaining it, and tips on how to wear earmuffs and earplugs properly. A new poster, *Wear ear protection properly*, is also enclosed. The leaflet, pocket card and poster will be available together as a priced *Ear protection pack*.

The pack supports HSE's Good Health is Good Business (GHGB) Campaign which aims to persuade employers that they can take simple steps to manage health risks effectively. The publications have been revised to complement *Reducing noise at work: Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations 1989*, which gives more detailed advice on the Regulations.

The Noise at Work Regulations 1989 set out measures to reduce and control noise levels at work and to cut the risk of damage to employees' hearing. The Regulations have two action levels relating to daily personal noise exposure averaged over an 8-hour working day - 85 dB(A) is the first action level and 90 dB(A) is the second. There is also a peak action level of 140 dB(C). In the woodworking industry, for example, noise levels around 104 dB(A) have been measured at thicknessers when no noise reduction measures have been taken.

The duty to provide ear protection depends on the exposure level. Where employees are exposed between the first and second action levels over an 8-hour working day, employers have to provide ear protection to workers who ask for it. Employers have to provide ear protection to all workers likely to be exposed at or above the second action level over an 8-hour working day and also to workers exposed to the peak action level.

HSE guidance on noise includes:

Woodworking Information Sheets

Noise reduction at band saws WIS4 HSE Books 1990

Noise enclosure at band re-saws WIS5 HSE Books 1990

Noise reduction at multi-spindle planing and moulding machines WIS8 HSE Books 1990

Noise at woodworking machines WIS13 HSE Books 1991

Ear protection publications

Ear protection: Employers' duties explained INDG298 HSE Books 1999

Protect your hearing! INDG299 HSE Books 1999

Wear ear protection properly poster MISC185 HSE Books 1999

Single copies are free or buy a pack of 30 pocket cards, 5 leaflets and 5 posters, ISBN 0 7176 2484 6 (£7.50)

Priced guidance

Reducing noise at work: Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations 1989 L108 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1511 1 (£9.75)

Sound solutions: Techniques to reduce noise at work HSG138 HSE Books 1995 ISBN 0 7176 0791 7 (£10.95)

See back page for how to obtain these publications.

Transport accidents in the woodworking industry

Approximately a third of the total fatalities reported each year in woodworking are transport related. For example, in 1997/98, three out of the seven involved some form of vehicle.

Over the last three years, HSE has been actively highlighting the importance of properly managing vehicle movements and pedestrian traffic at all work sites. Inspectors are checking to see:

- risk assessments have been completed and steps to control issues of concern have been taken;
- vehicle operators have appropriate and adequate training;
- vehicles and pedestrians are separated in areas of regular vehicle movement and controls such as speed limits, mirrors on blind corners and, if appropriate, one-way systems are in place;
- where appropriate, vehicle aids such as mirrors and reversing alarms are fitted and in good condition;
- passengers are only carried on vehicles with adequate seating arrangements.

HSE has published plenty of guidance on the subject recently. Of particular importance is the revised Approved Code of Practice on rider-operated lift trucks (see 'New publications' on back page for details) which now covers most forms of lift truck including side loaders. Other changes include guidance on the length of training courses and the need to also train multi-skilled employees who use the machines as a secondary or occasional part of their job, such as lorry drivers and management staff. Advice is also given on the control of non-employees operating lift trucks on site.

Where necessary HSE inspectors are taking enforcement action.

For example, in October of this year a board manufacturing company in Wales was prosecuted and fined £75 000 as a result of two separate accidents which occurred in the same area of their factory. The company had been warned there was a serious accident waiting to happen following an incident where a scaffolder was scooped up in the open bucket of a large industrial loader.

The second accident resulted in the death of a 55-year-old lorry driver who was hit and run over by a similar vehicle as he was walking across the site and returning to his lorry. The loader driver wasn't even aware an accident had

happened. The company had done nothing to keep pedestrians and vehicles apart in a busy sawdust storage area where these huge loading machines were being driven 24 hours a day. The size of the vehicles meant driver visibility was severely restricted, and was even worse when loads were being carried.

Circular saw benches - Safe working practices Information Sheet revised

Now the Woodworking Machines Regulations 1974 have been completely revoked, we have revised our Woodworking Information Sheet WIS16, *Circular saw benches - Safe working practices*.

The revision takes account of recent legislative changes including the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER 98) and associated Approved Code of Practice *Safe use of woodworking machinery*.

Changes have been made to include guidance on when it may be more appropriate to use a different type of machine (ie for grooving) and the new requirements for braking to reduce risks during rundown. Relevant European Standards are also now mentioned.

We have altered out of date setting requirements for riving knives and saw guard positions and have also taken the opportunity to revise some of the illustrations.

A copy of the revised sheet is included with this edition of **WOODNIG NEWS**. Additional copies can be obtained from HSE Books (see back page for details).

NEW EUROPEAN STANDARDS

Four more European Standards (ENs) covering the safety of woodworking machines have recently been published by the British Standards Institution (BSI). These bring the total number of published BS ENs on woodworking machinery to 11 (the other seven published Standards were listed in *WOODNIG NEWS* Issue 13, April 1999).

The first of the new Standards is **BS EN 1870-1: 1999 Circular saw benches (with and without sliding tables) and dimension saws**. This is an important Standard because these classes of machine account for some 35% of all injuries that occur on woodworking machinery.

The second new Standard, **BS EN 1870-2: 1999 Horizontal beam panel saws and vertical panel saws** also covers circular sawing machines.

BS EN 1807: 1999 Band sawing machines covers both narrow band saws and band re-saws (eg table band saws, log band saws, travelling table log saws and reciprocating carriage log saws). Between them these machines account

for 7% of all reported injuries on woodworking machinery. The Standard specifies requirements for machines with both manual and automatic loading, and covers machines with one or more saw blades.

The final new Standard is **BS EN 1218-1: 1999 Single-end tenoning machines with sliding table**. This covers hand-fed machines as well as those that are fitted with an integrated feed mechanism.

In common with the other woodworking Standards, the requirements cover control systems, mechanical hazards, noise and information for use. They are primarily aimed at manufacturers, to help them comply with the Supply of Machinery Regulations (the 'CE Regulations'), but users may also find these Standards helpful in meeting their obligations under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER).

Copies of Standards are available from BSI Customer Services, Tel: 020 8996 9001 Fax: 020 8996 7001.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT?

Garden centre fined £26 000 after 18-year-old man loses three fingers at a cross-cut saw.

The WOODNIG is sad to report, as we leave 1999, yet another incident where a young man (18 years old) will live the rest of his life with fingers missing as a result of a woodworking machine accident.

The accident occurred in March of this year as he was cross-cutting half round timber to 150 mm lengths to make decorative log-roll for lawn edging. He was using a **manually operated travelling head cross-cut saw**. It appears the wood slipped off the stop and as he attempted to put it back into position his left hand came into contact with the 390 mm diameter blade.

He had been employed for just six working days at the South Cambridgeshire garden centre and lost his little, ring and middle fingers as well as the tip of the index finger.

The investigation by South Cambridgeshire Environmental Health Department revealed the saw was fitted with a ripping blade which was not adequately guarded and was unsuitable for the purpose. Also, the company had no health and safety policy, had failed to adequately train their employee, and failed to report the accident.

The company was prosecuted in August at Cambridge Magistrates' Court. The garden centre plead guilty to four charges receiving total fines of £26 000 (£12 500 due to the lack of a safeguarding, £10 000 for the lack of a health and safety policy and £3500 for failing to report the accident) plus £1800 costs.

The accident could easily have been prevented. The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations, supported by the Approved Code of Practice *Safe use of woodworking machinery*, requires all wood machinists to be adequately trained and HSE Woodworking Information Sheet WIS36 *Safe use of manually operated cross-cut saws* gives guidance on how these machines should be used and safeguarded.

Safe use of woodworking machinery. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 as applied to woodworking machinery. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L114 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1630 4 (£8.00)

Safe use of manually operated cross-cut saws WIS36 HSE Books 1998 (free)

HSE WOOD DUST SURVEY

Back in 1988 HSE carried out a major wood dust survey to determine just what the typical dust levels were in the UK's woodworking industry.

About 40 companies were visited and 363 8-hour time-weighted-average (TWA) personal dust exposure samples were taken. Of the samples, 60% were below 5 mg/m³, ie the maximum exposure limit (MEL) for hardwood and softwood dusts under COSHH.

The findings of the survey were published in more detail in Woodworking Information Sheet WIS11 *Hardwood dust survey* (still available from HSE Books).

Now, just over ten years on, we are about to repeat the survey. A similar number of companies will be visited covering a representative sample of industries - including everything from sawmills to joineries, furniture and pallet manufacture.

We will include all sizes of company from all over the country whether they use hardwoods, softwoods or board materials (chipboard, MDF etc) - or a mixture of all the above.

The results will be used to give us a benchmark as to what the standards of wood dust control are like as we move into the new Millennium. They will be used to revise Woodworking Information Sheet WIS11 and to identify whether there are any gaps in our guidance on the control of wood dust.

We will keep **WOODNIG NEWS** readers updated as the survey progresses.

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.

Rider-operated lift trucks: Operator training. Approved Code of Practice and guidance Second edition L117 ISBN 0 7176 2455 2 (£5.00)

Thermal comfort in the workplace: Guidance for employers HSG194 ISBN 0 7176 2468 4 (£3.50)

Understanding health surveillance at work: An introduction for employers INDG304 (free for single copies or in priced packs on ISBN 0 7176 1712 2)

Health surveillance at work HSG61 ISBN 0 7176 1705 X (£7.00)

Fire safety: An employer's guide HMSO/HSE Books ISBN 0 11 341229 0 (£9.95)

Hand-arm vibration syndrome: Pocket card for employees INDG296P (free for single copies or in priced packs on ISBN 0 7176 2454 4)

Health and safety benchmarking INDG301 (free for single copies or in priced packs on ISBN 0 7176 2494 3)

The morning after the Millennium before: A strategy for restarting operations safely if you've been bitten by the Millennium Bug INDG302 (free)

Isocyanates: Health hazards and precautionary measures Guidance Note EH16 (revised 5th edition) ISBN 0 7176 1701 7 (£6.00)

A guide to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 L111 ISBN 0 7176 1604 5 (£14.00)

Preparing safety reports: Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 HSG190 ISBN 0 7176 1687 8 (£13.50)

All these publications are available from HSE Books.

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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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