

Training research published

In the December 2000 issue of *WOODNIG NEWS* we reported the early findings of a major research project into training for users of woodworking machinery.

The complete report *Availability, quality and standards of training for woodworking operators and supervisors* is now available from HSE Books in the Contract Research Report series (CRR339) ISBN 0 7176 2015 8 price £20.00. The report sets a demanding challenge for improvement because it shows a grim state of affairs across all the woodworking industries, particularly in the furniture and timber sectors.

One finding is that nationally there appears to be a reasonable number of woodworking training providers - a total of over 1000. However, only 139 offer wood machining training, and about half of these machining courses were dormant. We believe this is a worryingly low number for an industry employing over 200 000 people using high-risk machinery.

The research found the majority of training is delivered 'in house' often by an experienced employee or supervisor. To

be worthwhile, it is vital these people are fully familiar with the standards expected and with recent changes to the law. One of the most important challenges highlighted by the research is to find ways of improving in-house training so it is carried out by and produces people who are competent.

Barriers to training have been identified including cost, availability and time. The researchers found getting hold of information about where to get money for training is a difficult and confusing issue. Businesses must come across the same problem.

This is an important research report for anyone in the industry who has an interest in training, particularly for health and safety. Over the coming months we will be consulting Trade Associations, National Training Organisations, influential training providers, and others who may be in a position to change the current situation, seeking their views and working up strategies for improvement. Accident rates in woodworking are already high, and without adequate training they will certainly get higher.

WELSH SAWMILL FINED £43 500

A Welsh sawmill has been fined £43 500 and told to pay £4400 costs following an accident in which a 17-year-old worker had his right hand cut off while using a power-operated cross-cut saw with foot control.

He was sent to the mill by an employment agency three weeks before and spent the first few days banding timber. During his first two weeks he was also shown how to operate a cross-cut saw fitted with a two-hand control - which he was asked to use when the usual operator was temporarily doing other work.

The following week the cross-cut saw developed a fault and an old power-operated cross-cut saw with foot control was brought back into action.

The young worker was asked to provide cover at the power-operated cross-cut saw and cut some timber for ten minutes. He used the machine in exactly the same way as he had seen the usual operator use it and reached across the bench to pull the timber into position after a cut. His foot accidentally caught the foot pedal and initiated the cutting cycle. His right hand was amputated.

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The Magistrates commented that there had been gross negligence at all levels. The key failings identified were:

- Neither the injured worker nor the supervisor had received adequate training.
- The supervisor was not provided with adequate health and safety information or written instructions regarding the use of work equipment.
- They had not provided the employment agency with

information about the risks in the mill or the skills necessary for people to work there safely.

- The machine was not properly safeguarded.

The accident highlights the importance of training temporary staff and supervisors. How many of you could be in the same position?

Guidance on power-operated cross-cut saws is given in HSE Woodworking Information Sheet WIS35 *Safe use of power-operated cross-cut saws* available from HSE Books (see back cover for details).

DUST EXTRACTION - HAD IT TESTED?

In the last edition of *WOODNIG NEWS* we gave details of the HSE wood dust survey 2000 which revealed that a high proportion of the premises visited were not having their extraction systems thoroughly examined and tested in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 1999. The aim of these examinations is to ensure that local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems continue to operate as originally intended.

A thorough examination and test will normally comprise:

- a visual check;
- measurement of plant performance and the assessment of control;
- an assessment of the performance of the air cleaner or filter where air is recirculated.

The record of the examination and test should include details of:

- conditions at the time of test (for example normal production or stood down);

- information about the LEV plant which shows its intended operating performance. If this is not available then a baseline assessment will be required;
- whether the plant is still achieving the intended performance;
- any repairs required to achieve the intended performance;
- the methods used to make the judgements above (for example, air flow measurements, dust lamp, air sampling, filter integrity test).

Further guidance is given in *General COSHH ACOP*, *Carcinogens ACOP* and *Biological Agents ACOP*. *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999. Approved Codes of Practice L5*, paragraphs 52 to 65, ISBN 0 7176 1670 3. Also see *Maintenance, examination and testing of local exhaust ventilation HSG54* ISBN 0 7176 1485 9. Both publications are available from HSE Books (see back cover for details).

DO YOU EMPLOY PEOPLE UNDER 18?

HSE has published updated guidance for employers of people under 18. *Young people at work: A guide for employers* (second edition) explains employers' duties to protect young people at work, and gives guidance on how to assess the risks young workers are likely to encounter. It lists specific risks to young people and the actions which must be taken to avoid them. If you regularly take on young people in your workplace it contains useful information about working hours, reporting accidents, insurance and work experience.

The Approved Code of Practice *Safe use of woodworking machinery: Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 as applied to woodworking* states that young people under 18 should not be allowed to use high-risk woodworking machinery unless they have the necessary maturity and competence, which includes having completed appropriate training. High-

risk machinery includes hand-fed machines and also the following machines, however they are fed:

- any sawing machine fitted with a circular blade or saw band;
- a planing machine when used for surfacing; and
- a vertical spindle moulding machine.

Young people may operate high-risk machinery during training as long as they are adequately supervised. They should also be supervised after training if they are not sufficiently mature.

Young people at work: A guide for employers HSG165 ISBN 0 7176 1889 7, price £7.95 available from HSE Books.

SAFE STACKING OF SAWN TIMBER AND BOARD MATERIALS

In January, we sent out the revised Woodworking Information Sheet WIS2, *Safe stacking of sawn timber and board materials* to all addresses on our **WOODNIG NEWS** mailing list. We hope you received your copy.

The information sheet has been fully revised to take account of two substantial research reports on safe stacking and banding of sawn timber. It is aimed at all premises where timber and board materials are stacked and stored, not just woodworking premises. It does not deal with stacking on vehicles or stacking of round timber (logs).

Changes to the original sheet include improved guidance on:

- factors influencing timber-stack stability, including ground conditions, bearer choice, stack height and banding condition; and
- safe working practices and storage area management.

More information has also been included on the risks from **poor storage of board materials**. Nearly 40% of investigated stacking accidents have involved propped-up boards or doors. Typically the mass of boards or doors topple over as an attempt is made to withdraw a single board or door.

Stacking accidents are always serious. The size and weight

of the materials involved inflict horrible crushing injuries. Sometimes these injuries are fatal. Stacking is often given little thought and the risks are not fully appreciated.

Loose banding, poor weather conditions and unsafe stacking practices can all leave stacks on the point of collapse. We believe this sheet will help employers, and anyone else in control of stacking areas, to identify problems and take action to reduce the risks.

Everyone involved in timber stacking and handling of board materials should obtain a copy of the revised free information sheet and use it to check that safe working practices are being followed and stacks are being safely constructed.

Further copies of Woodworking Information Sheet WIS2(rev1) *Safe stacking of sawn timber and board materials* can be ordered free from HSE Books (see back cover for details).

The research reports *Safety of timber stacks - stability of sawn timber* (HSL Research Report ME/99/25 www.hse.gov.uk/fod/sawntimb.pdf) and *Safety of timber stacks - banding of sawn timber packs* (HSL Research Report ME/98/21 www.hse.gov.uk/fod/timber01.htm) are also available to download from HSE's website.

SAFE USE OF VERTICAL SPINDLE MOULDING MACHINES

A revised version of Woodworking Information Sheet WIS18, *Safe use of vertical spindle moulding machines*, has been published.

The revision brings the guidance into line with the requirements of PUWER 98 and the associated *Safe use of woodworking machinery* Approved Code of Practice. It also takes account of two recently published European Standards (namely BS EN 848-1: 1999 which covers vertical spindle moulders and BS EN 847-1: 1997 on tooling).

The two most significant changes relate to the requirements to ensure that:

- by 5 December 2003 only tooling of a limited cutter projection design is used; and
- by 5 December 2005 a braking device is fitted

which will bring the tool to rest within 10 seconds of the machine being switched off.

Vertical spindle moulding machines account for around 14% of all injuries caused by woodworking machines. These injuries all too frequently include amputations of one or more fingers.

Common causes of accidents include the failure to use cheap and simple safety devices such as a false fence, pressure pads or work holder. These deficiencies in themselves are often symptoms of management failings, eg inadequate training provision and supervision.

A copy of the revised sheet is included with this edition of **WOODNIG NEWS**. Additional copies are available from HSE Books (see back cover for details).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT?

A woodworking company from South Wales was recently fined £10 000 plus £1500 costs after an employee was fatally injured. The employee was struck in the head when a length of timber, measuring approximately 990 x 10 x 30 mm, was ejected from a universal (or combined) woodworking machine.

The operator of the machine was a labourer whose work involved hand finishing components. No part of his work involved using woodworking machinery; he was not trained, authorised or instructed to use machinery as part of his work. Consequently the machine he was using was not properly guarded. At the time of the incident the 'thickness' element of the machine was in use and the operator was machining five lengths of beading for his own use. The deceased was standing at the outfeed end of the machine, helping the machine operator by taking off the timber as it came out of the thicknesser. It appears that the operator misfed the final workpiece, so that it came out via the surface planing tables, and part of it snapped off and was ejected at high speed towards the deceased.

The employer was prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992. There was little evidence of there being any arrangements within the company to manage health and safety. There was no health and safety policy, no risk assessments, no training provision, minimal supervision and no formalised way of providing information for employees.

The machine operator was prosecuted under section 7 of the HSW Act and fined £1250 plus £250 costs. The Act requires, among other things, that employees take reasonable care for the health and safety of other people who may be affected by what they do, or fail to do, at work.

Any person who uses woodworking machinery at work must have received adequate training. Only machine operators who have been authorised, ideally in writing, should be allowed to use woodworking machinery. Good supervision is vital for spotting potential hazards and ensuring that safe systems of work are followed.

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 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's InfoLine Tel: 08701 545500 Fax: 02920 859260 e-mail: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG. You can also visit HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk

NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM HSE

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

Safe use of vertical spindle moulding machines
Woodworking Information Sheet WIS18(rev1)
HSE Books 2001

Selecting protective gloves for work with chemicals: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists
INDG330 HSE Books 2000 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1827 7)

Young people at work: A guide for employers
HSG165 (new edition) HSE Books 2000
ISBN 0 7176 1889 7 (£7.95)

Assessing and managing risks at work from skin exposure to chemical agents: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists
HSG205 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 1826 9 (£8.00)

Cost and effectiveness of chemical protective gloves for the workplace: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists
HSG206 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 1828 5 (£8.50)

A simple guide to the Biocidal Products Regulations
INDG321 HSE Books 2001 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1789 0)

Safety in the use of abrasive wheels
HSG17 (new PUWER 98 edition) HSE Books 2000
ISBN 0 7176 1739 4 (£7.50)

All these publications are available from HSE Books.

HSE GOES DIRECT

HSE's new online information service **hsedirect** (www.hsedirect.com) contains all the latest health and safety legislation; Approved Codes of Practice and HSE guidance on legislation; guidance from HSE on specific workplaces, processes and substances; EU directives; and HSE forms.

For more information about **hsedirect**, log on to www.hsedirect.com or telephone **hsedirect** enquiries on 0845 3003142.

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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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