



WOODWORKING NEWS

Newsletter
of the
Woodworking
National Interest Group

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WOODWORKING SAFETY AWARENESS DAYS

HSE's Safety Awareness Days for small woodworking businesses are proving to be a great success. We have now held seven events, each attracting nearly 200 small businesses. Those attending hear and see informative presentations on bracing and tooling, wood dust control, and reduction of manual handling risks in the workplace.

The aim of the events is to improve the awareness of current health and safety issues in small woodworking businesses and to encourage participants to take action to reduce risks in the workplace - and they are completely free of charge.

A woodworking training company, Didac Ltd, carries out the presentations on our behalf. HSE inspectors are available to answer questions and discuss health and safety issues and concerns. Each person who attends receives a set of free literature relevant to his or her workplace, as well as free refreshments.

So far we have held events in Accrington, Luton, Burton-on-Trent, Thurrock, Bristol, Derby and St Leonards. A further three are planned for London, Halifax and Falkirk. By the end of this work year, approximately 1760 businesses will have attended.

Evaluation forms completed by those who attended the most recent day at Burton are typical of the views we receive and demonstrate just how worthwhile they are.

For example, everybody thought the aim of the event had been met and everyone who completed an evaluation form said they would recommend it to other businesses. Significantly, nearly 98% of those attending were highly likely to take action back in their workplace on something they had seen or learnt.

Below are some quotes taken from the evaluation forms:

- 'Well put together. Four topics in two hours is just right. Concise and to the point.'
- 'A worthwhile experience which should be encouraged and we would like to know about any future events.'
- 'I liked the environment in which information and advice was given. With other woodworkers there etc. it was less intimidating and a good chance to discuss specific instances with others and experts.'
- 'I attended to keep up to date with current issues and legislation.'

We are encouraged by the extremely positive attitude from those who attend. We feel sure that improvements will be put in place and that health and safety risks will be controlled. Lets face it - woodworking hasn't got a great reputation for safety.

If an invitation arrives on your desk, please don't miss your opportunity.

Noise - Don't buy a problem

When you are planning to buy a new item of woodworking machinery, does noise figure on your list of priorities? And if you do ask your supplier about the noise produced by the machine, are you satisfied with the answers you get?

Woodworking machinery, like all machinery, is subject to the requirements of the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations. These essentially require that machinery is designed and constructed in a way that minimises risks to safety and health during its use, setting and maintenance. Where noise is concerned, the requirement is that the risks arising from noise are reduced to the lowest level, taking account of technical progress. In other words, the manufacturer must 'design out' as much of the noise as possible, by using whatever state-of-the-art techniques exist and are applicable to the machine.

Where there remains a significant level of noise from the machine, the manufacturer must provide noise emission information. This information has two purposes - it allows potential purchasers to compare different machines, and (in theory) it gives a warning of 'residual risk' from noise. Think of 'residual risk' as the manufacturer saying, 'We've done our best to design the machine to be as quiet as possible, but be aware that it still produces some noise'.

So an employer, duty-bound to ensure the health and safety of his or her employees, should be considering risks from noise when buying new machinery. But is the information currently being provided by manufacturers adequate to allow that to be done? In practice, the quality of information provided is variable, and you may find that some manufacturers and suppliers have trouble finding the information you request. But the information should, by law, be available to you, so be persistent. In fact, HSE would be interested to hear about any suppliers who can't (or won't) give you this information.

The information that should be supplied is:

- **Noise level at the workstation(s)** if it exceeds 70 dB(A) (if below 70 dB(A) this must be stated).
- **Peak noise at the workstation(s)** if it exceeds 130 dB (if below 130 dB this must be stated).
- **Sound power level of the machine** (required if the workstation noise level is above 85 dB(A)).

Think of the sound power level as the total noise energy being produced by the machine - a good measure of its tendency to generate noise, and its likely impact on the whole workshop. For many types of machine there will be a standardised test method, so that in theory all the machines of that type will have had their noise emissions tested in the same way. But be aware that, while some test methods use a real operation, others may allow the noise emission to be tested during simulated use, or even while the machine is idling. So the noise data may not relate directly to the levels produced in real use. But at the very least, you should be able to see which machines are generally the noisiest.

So don't buy a problem - think about noise when buying new machines and demand the information from potential suppliers. Buy quiet, and you'll go a long way towards protecting the hearing of your employees.

HSE has recently published a comprehensive leaflet on noise for employers, including information on a low-noise purchasing policy, and a pocket card for employees. *Noise at work: Advice for employers* Leaflet INDG362 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 2539 7) and *Protect your hearing or lose it!* Pocket card INDG363 (single copy free or priced packs of 25 ISBN 0 7176 2540 0) are available from HSE Books.

FIRE AND EXPLOSION

New Regulations to control fire and explosion risks from dangerous substances and potentially explosive atmospheres came into force on 9 December 2002. The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) will apply to all dangerous substances including wood dust, flammable solvents and paints. They set minimum requirements for the protection of workers from fire and explosion risks related to dangerous substances and potentially explosive atmospheres.

DSEAR will provide a modern framework for managing the risks of fire and explosions and will enable around

20 pieces of old legislation to be repealed or modernised. This will provide benefits for employers who will in future have significantly less legislation to consider. DSEAR does not contain requirements that are fundamentally new - employers currently meeting existing legislation should therefore notice no significant change.

HSE has published a leaflet outlining the basic requirements of the Regulations. *Fire and explosion - How safe is your workplace? A short guide to the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations* INDG370 (single copy free or priced packs of 5 ISBN 0 7176 2589 3) is available from HSE Books.

NEW HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES REGULATIONS

New regulations aiming to protect workers from the risks of hazardous substances came into force during November. They are:

- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002;
- Control of Lead at Work Regulations (CLAW) 2002;
- Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (CAW) 2002 (apart from regulations 4 and 20 which do not come into force till 2004).

They update and replace existing regulations covering the same risks.

Most of the changes to the regulations simply make explicit what is currently implicit in the current regulations and Approved Codes of Practice. However they now also include a new requirement for employers, in certain circumstances, to draw up detailed procedures for dealing with accidents, incidents and emergencies that involve hazardous substances.

Although the changes made to the regulations are numerous, employers who are already fully complying with the current regulations and their supporting Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs) should to a large extent already be carrying out the duties the new regulations will impose. Many smaller firms who prefer legislation in a form that sets out more precisely what they must do to comply with the law may welcome the increased prescription in the regulations.

Extensively revised Approved Codes of Practice support the new regulations. The new COSHH ACOP includes an appendix 'Control of substances that cause occupational asthma' which HSC approved last year as part of its current asthma initiative. Remember that wood dust is a recognised cause of occupational asthma.

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations include a new requirement to manage asbestos in workplace buildings. There will be a duty on anyone with maintenance and repair responsibilities in workplaces to assess whether they contain asbestos and, if so, whether it presents a risk. They must then deal with that risk, either by warning anyone liable to disturb the asbestos or by removing it, if it is in poor condition. This new duty will have lead-in period of 18 months and will come into force on 21 May 2004.

The aim is to ensure building and maintenance workers are not unknowingly exposed to asbestos fibres during their day-to-day work.

Around 500 000 premises are believed to still contain asbestos, which puts a wide range of workers potentially at risk including electricians, plumbers, carpenters, joiners and builders.

See the 'New publications from HSE' section for details of the recently published Approved Codes of Practice.

Are you forgetting the simple things?

Slips and trips account for nearly 13% of all injuries to woodworking employees. With all the press and pressure about the braking and tooling changes brought about by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, it is easy to forget the simple things that can also reduce risks in your workplace.

Anyone at work, but particularly employers, can help to reduce slip and trip hazards through good health and safety arrangements. Effective solutions are often simple and cheap. For example, improve lighting on stairways, keep gangways clear of obstructions, remove waste regularly, and choose suitable non-slip floor surfaces.

Look for slip and trip hazards around the workplace, such as uneven floors, trailing cables, areas that are prone to dust and chipping build-up, or may be slippery due to spillages. Then take action to control the risk of injury.

Good housekeeping is common sense - it also stops costly accidents and ill health.

Guidance is available in the free HSE leaflet INDG225 *Preventing slips, trips and falls at work*. More detailed advice is given in the HSE publication HSG155 *Slips and trips: Guidance for employers on identifying hazards and controlling risks* ISBN 0 7176 1145 0. These are both available from HSE Books.

HORSEPLAY COSTS 19-YEAR- OLD HIS FINGERS

Horseplay at a Midlands sawmilling company caused a 19-year-old employee to lose his fingers on a cross-cut saw when another employee pushed him against the bench and pulled the saw across his hand.

The 19-year-old, who was employed as labourer, went to the toilet, which was occupied, tapped a piece of wood on the toilet panel then returned to his workstation. The employee who was in the toilet came up from behind and pushed him with his back against a cross-cut bench. He then grabbed his legs with one hand and gripped the saw with his other hand. The saw was started and he drew it onto the bench severing all of the 19-year-old's left-hand fingers on the cut line. The saw was fitted with a 350 mm blade and a retraction device. It was operated with a 'dead-man's' trigger, but the run-down time was still 45 seconds. The machine operator at the time of the accident was on his break.

Police later charged the employee involved in the incident with actual bodily harm. The defendant pleaded guilty at Wolverhampton Crown Court and the judge ordered 150 hours of community service plus £750 compensation. He was also dismissed by the company for gross misconduct following their own internal investigation.

Occasionally horseplay among employees can result in serious consequences as this case has highlighted. Cross-cut saws have a history of causing serious accidents and the majority of them have resulted in amputations.

Under section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, it is the duty of every employee while at work to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself and of other people who may be affected by his acts or omissions. It is also an employer's responsibility under section 2 to protect staff from the risks associated with work-related violence so far as is reasonably practicable.

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

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NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM HSE

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

Control of substances hazardous to health. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance (Fourth edition) L5 ISBN 7176 2534 6, price £10.50

Control of lead at work. Control of Lead at Work Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance (Third edition) L132 ISBN 0 7176 2565 6, price £10.50

The management of asbestos in non-domestic premises. The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L127 ISBN 0 7176 2382 3, price £9.50

Work with asbestos which does not normally require a licence. Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance (Fourth edition) L27 ISBN 0 7176 2562 1, price £9.50

Work with asbestos insulation, asbestos coating and asbestos insulating board. Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance (Fourth edition) L28 ISBN 0 7176 2563 X, price £9.50

A comprehensive guide to managing asbestos in premises HSG227 ISBN 0 7176 2381 5, price £12.50

A short guide to managing asbestos in premises INDG223(rev3) (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 2564 8)

The right start: Work experience for young people - Health and safety basics for employers Leaflet INDG364 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 2547 8)

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 and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's
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