

# HSE SAFETY CORNERSTONES

Provided by **The Risk Hub Ltd**

November - December 2023

## Managing Hand-arm Vibration

Hand-arm vibration (HAV) is often caused by work processes involving hand-held power tools that can affect workers' hands and arms. Regular and frequent exposure to HAV can result in permanent health effects, including Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS), a condition characterised by painful numbness and tingling in the hands and arms, and joint pain.

Employers must protect workers from injury and ill health caused by HAV under the **Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005**. Alongside scrutinising industry-specific guidance, employers may wish to consider the following risk-mitigation strategies:

- **Select appropriate equipment.** Organisations should compare the vibration emissions of different models when selecting equipment. Ideally, equipment should have the lowest vibration possible while still being suitable for the job. It may be prudent for employers to specify maximum vibration emission levels within workplace safety policies.
- **Limit daily exposure.** Organisations should plan work patterns to limit employee exposure to vibration. Specifically, employers should establish a maximum daily exposure duration and leverage rotas to further limit employees' exposure to

vibration. Regular breaks should be encouraged, allowing tool operators to exercise their hands, arms and fingers to alleviate tension and facilitate circulation.

- **Provide personal protective equipment (PPE).** Although gloves can't provide direct protection against HAV, keeping employees' hands warm could decrease risk by encouraging good blood circulation. Consequently, employers should provide workers with gloves, warm clothing and other appropriate PPE, especially when working in cool conditions.
- **Train staff.** Organisations must provide equipment operators and supervisors with information about the risks from vibration and robust training relating to the correct use and maintenance of equipment.

Overall, employers should provide alternative work processes to avoid HAV altogether wherever possible. Alternatively, they must take reasonable steps to reduce vibration risks to the lowest level that's reasonably practicable.

Contact us today for further health and safety workplace guidance.

## Food Processing Company Sentenced After Worker Suffers Serious Injuries

A food processing company has been fined after an employee's arm was drawn into machinery and seriously injured. The worker was removing debris from an open access panel door at the base of a hopper machine while the auger was still in operation. The auger caught the worker's arm, drawing it into the machine and up to the elbow. The injuries sustained required surgery. An investigation by the HSE found that the company had no controls in place to prevent the panel from being opened while the auger was moving, and there were no safe isolation procedures for cleaning tasks.

On 9th October 2023, the company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act. [It was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,839.21.](#)

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