

# Assessment and control of wood dust: use of the dust lamp

Woodworking Sheet No 12 *HSE information sheet*

## Introduction

This Information Sheet is one of a series prepared by the HSE's Woodworking National Interest Group.

Wood dust is a substance hazardous to health, and employers have duties under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 1994 to make an assessment of the exposure of their employees to this hazard and then to prevent or control it (see Woodworking Sheets numbers 1, 6, and 11.)

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## The dust lamp

A dust lamp produces a high intensity, parallel beam of light; it can be mains or battery operated.

The dust lamp is a useful tool, particularly when starting an assessment. It will not tell you exactly how much dust is in the air but it will show up fine dust not visible under normal lighting conditions. This is important as the fine dust stays airborne for much longer than the coarser (visible) dust and may follow a very different pathway. Its path is more easily influenced by factors such as bulk air movements, movement of the workpiece etc. Figure 2 shows a sanding operation under normal lighting conditions and Figure 3 the same operation seen with the help of a dust lamp.

The lamp will show the source of the dust cloud, including for example unsuspected leaks in duct work. It will also demonstrate the direction of movement of the dust under operating conditions. This will often vary through the stages of an operation and can be strongly influenced by methods of work.

The information gained can be used to target and prioritise remedial action, and will help in designing engineering controls.