



WOODNIG NEWS

Newsletter
of HSE's
Manufacturing Sector -
Woodworking Group

Issue 28

August 2006

New Principal Inspector

Welcome to Issue 28 of **WOODNIG NEWS**. There is a lot going on at the moment. Firstly, apologies for the delay in getting this issue out – this is due to recent staff changes and the large demands made on the small team who work with your industry. We hope to revert to two issues of **WOODNIG NEWS** a year in due course.

Firstly, Tim Small has replaced Maureen Kingman as Principal Inspector and is based in HSE's Nottingham office. He is looking forward to the challenge of working with the woodworking industry and building on Maureen and Alan's hard work. If you have any comments about **WOODNIG NEWS** or suggestions for future articles, you can e-mail Tim at tim.small@hse.gov.uk.

By working together, we can reduce the suffering that goes with many of the avoidable accidents that occur in the woodworking industry and make it a more pleasant, healthier place to work. However, this is only half the picture. Sensible health and safety is about controlling risks in your workplace, but it can also have a positive effect on your business.

HSE inspectors are about to begin a programme of visits to woodworking businesses. They will be hoping to find that you have adopted the precautions described in this edition of **WOODNIG NEWS** regarding vehicle and machinery safety and control of wood dust. They can also offer advice on how to implement changes because of the new Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.

New Noise Regulations come into force

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 came into force on 6 April 2006. They replace the existing Noise at Work Regulations 1989.

The aim of the Regulations is to eliminate all new cases of hearing damage caused by work by 2030. The emphasis is on identifying measures to eliminate or reduce noise at source rather than just relying on hearing protection.

What do you need to do?

The 1989 Regulations applied to most woodworking premises, so you should already have some control measures in place. You will need to review existing risk assessments and think again about noise-control measures. A key change is that employees who were advised to use hearing protection under the 1989 Regulations will now be required to wear the protection supplied.

For more information about the Regulations and simple steps that can be taken to reduce exposure to noise visit: www.hse.gov.uk/noise.

The main things that the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require employers to do are:

- Assess the risks to their employees from noise at work.
- Take action to reduce the noise exposure that creates these risks.
- Provide their employees with hearing protection if they cannot reduce the noise exposure enough through other methods. You should make hearing protection available at 80 dB and ensure it is worn at 85 dB.
- Make sure the legal limits on noise exposure (87 dB daily or weekly exposure or peak sound pressure of 140 dB taking account of hearing protection) are not exceeded.
- Provide employees with information, instruction and training.
- Carry out health surveillance where there is a risk to health.

HSE has produced a simple guide, *Noise at work: Guidance for employers on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005*. This is available from HSE Books or www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf.

Workplace transport

Transport is one of the biggest risks in UK workplaces and it affects most woodworking premises to some extent. Every year around 70 people are killed and 2000 more are seriously injured in incidents involving workplace transport. Often these incidents occur in a lorry park or yard while goods are being delivered. In many cases, it is the driver who is injured.

If a few simple precautions are taken, these accidents are largely avoidable and HSE has published new guidance to help employers, managers and supervisors reduce the risks. *Workplace transport safety: An employers' guide* (HSG136) gives detailed practical advice on common vehicle operations, some risks associated with them, and how to deal with safety for each type of operation. A free leaflet is also available: *Workplace transport safety: An overview* (INDG199(rev1)). Also look at www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/index.htm and www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/index.htm for more transport-related information and guidance.

10 ways to make your site safer

- Ensure good lighting in all areas – check bulbs regularly.
- Keep delivery areas tidy – remove crates, bins, rubbish etc.
- Demarcate parking bays, pedestrian routes and vehicle-only areas.
- Keep pedestrians apart from vehicles.
- Get a high-visibility vest or jacket and wear it.
- Avoid reversing if possible – could you make your site one-way?
- Send information about your site to drivers before they arrive.
- Drivers – check you have site information before you leave your depot.
- Mirrors can help cope with blind spots – keep them clean.
- Drivers – stay in the rest room, safe area or the cab during unloading.

CONTROLLING EXPOSURE TO WOOD DUST

Wood dust is one of the top ten causes of occupational asthma in the UK and carpenters and joiners are four times more likely to develop asthma compared to the UK working population as a whole.

Wood dust can cause sensitisation of the lungs, which means that the symptoms are triggered by re-exposure to whatever caused the initial sensitisation. In other words, once you are sensitised, you run the risk of having an asthma attack every time you go to work. Sensitisation is irreversible – in the worst case, your livelihood is at risk and you may have to leave the industry.

What is HSE doing?

In recent years, we have been running safety and health awareness days (SHADs) to get our message across to woodworkers – a quarter of each one is devoted to controlling wood dust. From September 2006, these will be backed up by inspection. Inspectors will be visiting woodworking premises across the country to check that companies are controlling dust properly.

What do you need to do?

Inspectors will expect to see effective, properly maintained local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems in use. In addition, these should be thoroughly examined by a competent person at least once every 14 months. Suitable vacuum cleaners should be used – there is no good reason to use dry sweeping or airlines to clear dust from machinery, workpieces or clothes.

Inspectors will also expect to see LEV supplemented with properly worn respiratory protective equipment (RPE) for particularly dusty tasks such as sanding. Basic health surveillance should also be in place. If we don't find these things, some form of enforcement action is likely.

If you have any doubts about what you should already have done, further information can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/index.htm.

Braking woodworking machines

Many accidents involving woodworking machinery occur when the blade or tooling is 'running down'. Braking motor spindles significantly reduces the risk of this type of accident.

New woodworking machinery is now supplied with factory-fitted braking systems. However, many existing machines are not. Where this is the case, and the run-down time is greater than 10 seconds, then you will need to retrofit an appropriate form of braking unless the blade or tool is inaccessible during rundown. The deadline for doing this for most commonly used machines was December 2005.

Band re-saws were covered by the December 2005 deadline. Braking some very large band re-saws is not possible, but for the majority of machines it can be done.

HSE's research indicates there are still a large number of machines including band re-saws and spindle moulders in use that have not been braked. There is still an opportunity for non-compliant machinery to be braked before companies are visited during the forthcoming HSE inspection initiative to woodworking premises. However, the time for further advice and guidance regarding the retrospective braking of existing machinery has passed and if inspectors find non-compliant machinery during these visits, enforcement action will be taken.

Further details of what is required can be found in HSE's woodworking information sheet *PUWER 98: Retrofitting of braking to woodworking machines* which is available from HSE Books (see 'Further information' section) or www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wis38.pdf.

CHIP LIMITED TOOLING

In *WOODNIG NEWS 27* we reported anecdotal evidence that the use of chip limited tooling has prevented several amputations. It is now two and a half years since the deadline passed for the changeover to chip limited tooling. Those still burying their heads in the sand and continuing to use old style cutters are now receiving Improvement Notices to replace them.

However, several companies have seen the changeover as an opportunity rather than an inconvenience. One of these is Poundall Joinery in Nottingham who specialise in the manufacture of doors and frames. All of their hand-fed machines now use chip limited tooling. Works manager Chris Hill explained: 'The slightly longer set-up times are offset by improvements to some of our processes and for some jobs a better finish to the work'. However, he said the main benefit was the peace of mind he now has, because as a manager he has done the best he can for his employees by

providing them with the safest tooling available.

They still take on 'one-off' jobs which, as well as providing useful income, allow them to build up their 'library' of chip limited cutters. This approach is now paying dividends because often when they are approached to do a bespoke profile they find they already have the required cutter.

We have recently become aware of several serious accidents involving grooving saws that were not chip limited. Poundall Joinery now use chip limited tooling for grooving – so should you!

The information sheet *PUWER 98: Selection of tooling for use with hand-fed woodworking machines* provides further information on what you need to do and can be found at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wis37.pdf.

Costly fine for flooring manufacturer

In April, a flooring manufacturer was fined £15 000 and had to pay costs of £23 000 after pleading guilty to a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The prosecution followed an incident where a 16-year-old employee suffered serious hand injuries when carrying out a very repetitive task using a circular saw.

If you have young employees, you should remember that they are often exposed to risks to their health and safety because of their lack of:

- maturity;
- experience; or
- awareness of existing or potential risks.

Young people should not use high-risk woodworking machinery unless they have the necessary maturity and competence. This includes having completed the appropriate training. By law, a young person is anyone who has not reached 18 years old.

A thorough risk assessment will allow you to decide if a young person can work without putting themselves and others at risk and the level of supervision they will require.

Further details of the issues you should consider and the actions you need to take can be found in the Approved Code of Practice L114 *Safe use of woodworking machinery. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 as applied to woodworking machinery* which can be obtained from HSE Books (see 'Further information' section).

New free health and safety advice for small businesses

Workplace Health Connect is a new service for small businesses, giving free, confidential and impartial advice on workplace health, safety and return-to-work issues.

The service provides an Advice line for England and Wales (Tel: 0845 609 6006), which, in five regions (North East, North West, West Midlands, South Wales and Greater London), is supported by Workplace Health Connect adviser teams who provide free, problem-solving workplace visits. The focus is on helping those businesses with between 5 and 250 workers identify and manage work-related health risks.

Often much harder to identify than safety issues, work-related health risks are estimated to cause 28.5 million working days to be lost each year and this costs the UK economy approximately £10 billion annually.

Workplace Health Connect can help by providing high quality advice, tailored to your specific needs. Completely free, with no catches, it enables managers and workers to gain the skills and knowledge they need to deal with these issues themselves in the future.

Healthy Working Lives, a similar service to Workplace Health Connect, operates in Scotland. Contact details can be found at www.healthscotland.com/hwl/index.cfm.

Woodworking Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

A further round of SHADs is planned between October 2006 and March 2007. These events will be held in the West Midlands, South Wales, Exeter and the Newcastle-upon-Tyne area. If you would like to receive further details when they become available, please contact Wendie Drammeh at wendie.drammeh@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

• YOUR VIEWS • YOUR VIEWS • YOUR VIEWS • YOUR VIEWS •

What do you think of **WOODNIG NEWS**?
What would you like to see in future editions?
Send your views to Alan Scobbie 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.

Noise at work: Guidance for employers on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 Leaflet INDG362(rev1) HSE Books 2005 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 6165 2) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf

Protect your hearing or lose it! Pocket card INDG363(rev1) HSE Books 2005 (single copy free or priced packs of 25 ISBN 0 7176 6166 0) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg363.pdf

Workplace transport safety: An overview Leaflet INDG199(rev1) HSE Books 2005 (single copy free or priced packs of 5 ISBN 0 7176 2821 3) Web version: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg199.pdf

Workplace transport safety: An employers' guide HSG136 (Second edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 0 7176 6154 7

HSE launches woodworking web pages

HSE launched its new woodworking web pages on 17 August. For the first time, guidance and information specific to the woodworking industry is available in one place, with links to a range of other relevant web pages. Free guidance is available to download. Visit the site at www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/index.htm. We know it's not perfect, so please let us have your thoughts on how we can improve it – you can e-mail Tim Small at tim.small@hse.gsi.gov.uk or Alan Scobbie at alan.scobbie@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books,
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