

WDO

COSHH essentials for woodworkers



This information will help managers comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to wood dusts and protect workers' health.

It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice for managing the control of exposure to wood dust.

Advice for managers

Introduction

Wood dust can cause cancer, dermatitis and serious lung diseases including asthma.

'Wood dust' includes dust from hardwood, softwood, and composite boards such as MDF.

Control exposure to wood dust to stop occupational asthma developing.

If an individual does develop occupational asthma, avoid further exposure.

Some woods, eg western red cedar, are known to cause asthma.

Exposure limits

Softwood dust and hardwood dust have workplace exposure limits (WELs) set at 5 mg/m³ (8-hour TWA) total inhalable dust.

You need to keep exposures as low as is reasonably practicable below these limits.

Advice sheets in this series

- WD1 Bandsaw
- WD2 Circular bench saw
- WD3 Cross-cut saw
- WD4 Vertical spindle moulder
- WD5 Overhead and CNC routers
- WD6 Sanding machines (fixed)
- WD7 Sanding machines (hand-held)
- WD8 Assembly with a downdraught bench
- WD9 Stand-alone dust collector (occasional use)

Action

Getting these sheets helps you to assess the wood dust risk. Before acting, make sure the advice really fits your situation. Following all the advice in these sheets means that you will normally comply with WELs and exposure will be as low as is reasonably practicable. Read the advice in each of the sheet(s) you downloaded. Compare it with what you do now.

You may already have the right controls in place, but are they all working properly? When were they last checked? Are they always used when needed?

You need to keep all controls in good working order. This means mechanical controls (eg dust extraction), administrative controls (eg supervision, health surveillance and testing) and operator behaviour (following instructions). Look at all aspects of the advice. Don't pick and choose - the points work together to provide 'adequate control'. See sheet G406 for advice on engineering controls.

You should carry out health surveillance for workers (see sheet G402 - occupational asthma and G403 - occupational dermatitis).

Consider air sampling to check the controls - see sheet G409.

Show that control is being sustained – keep good records.

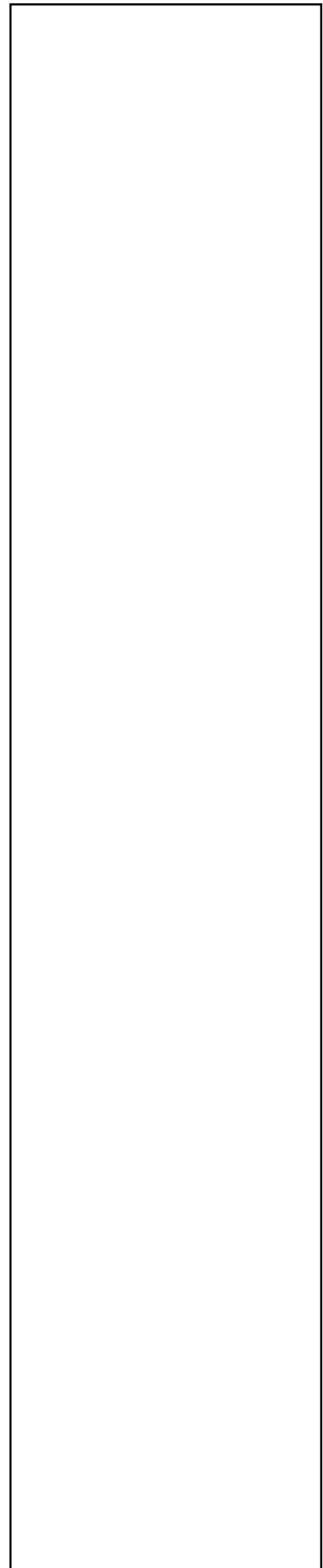
If you are in doubt, seek expert help. Remember, just because this advice means that you have to change old working practices or spend money on new controls, doesn't make it unsuitable! Decide how best to make any changes required 'across the board'.

If you do need expert help, please don't give up. Ask your trade association, trade union, or log onto www.bohs.org.

Facilities

Provide clean facilities: a washroom, showers, storage for clean and contaminated work clothing, and a refreshment area.

Provide pre-work skin creams and after-work cream to replace skin oils.



Information, training and supervision

Tell workers:

- that wood dust can cause asthma, cancer and dermatitis;
- to do the job in the correct way and minimise dust clouds;
- to use dust extraction and cleaning equipment properly;
- if equipment is not working – report it;
- to keep any respiratory protection clean and wear it properly;
- to keep surfaces clean as this will help to prevent dust being made airborne again; and
- never to sweep up or use compressed air for cleaning.

Train and supervise workers - you need to make sure they are doing the job in the right way, and using controls properly to reduce their exposure as low as possible. Include supervisors and managers in health and safety training.

Training should include:

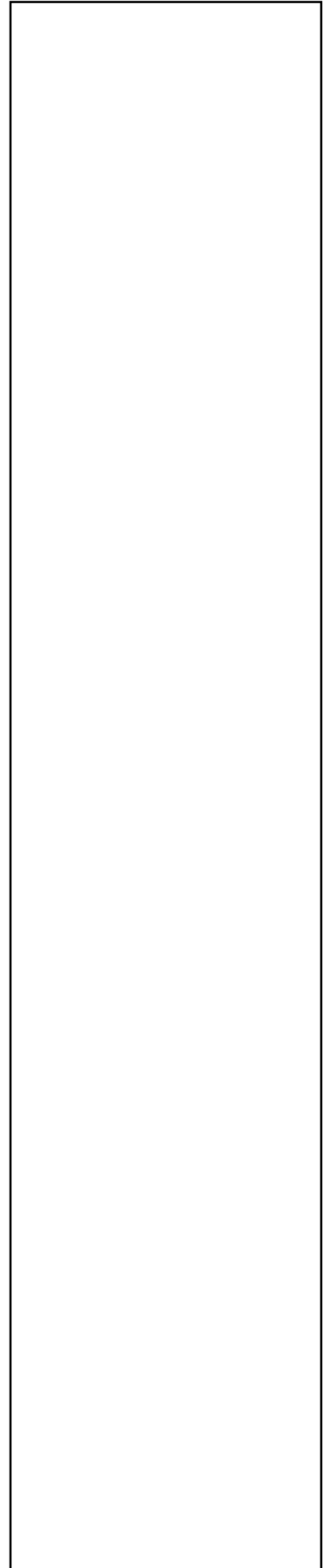
- how to use the dust controls and how to check that they are working;
- how to maintain and clean equipment safely;
- how to use and look after personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- what to do if something goes wrong.

Remind workers that cotton and knitted work clothing hold onto dust that is later inhaled.

Remind workers to check any respiratory protective equipment every time they put it on.

Supervision means checking workers:

- use the controls provided;
- follow the correct work method;
- turn up for health surveillance; and
- are following the rules on personal hygiene.



Further information

See www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/woodindx.htm for the following:

- *Wood dust: Hazards and precautions* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS1(rev1) HSE Books 1997
- *COSHH and the woodworking industries* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS6(rev1) HSE Books 1997
- *Selection of respiratory protective equipment suitable for use with wood dust* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS14 HSE Books 1991
- *Health risks during furniture stripping using dichloromethane (DCM)* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS19 HSE Books 1993
- *LEV: General principles of system design* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS23 HSE Books 1992
- *LEV: Dust capture at sawing machines* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS24 HSE Books 1992
- *LEV: Dust capture at fixed belt sanding machines* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS25 HSE Books 1992
- *LEV: Dust capture at fixed drum and disc sanding machines* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS26 HSE Books 1992
- *Occupational hygiene and health surveillance at industrial treatment plants* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS29(rev1) HSE Books 2002
- *Toxic woods* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS30 HSE Books 1995

Environmental guidelines

Releases and wastes may be regulated within the Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) framework. You should consult your local authority or the Environment Agency.

In Scotland, consult the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

For more information, see www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.