

## H13 – Opening Statement

### Vibration at Work

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Vibration in the workplace affects the body in two distinct ways therefore it is classified as follows:

- Hand-arm vibration
- Whole body vibration.

Regular exposure to hand-arm vibration can cause a range of conditions known as hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) which includes vibration white finger and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Around five million workers are exposed to hand-arm vibration in the workplace. Two million of these workers are exposed to levels of vibration where there are clear risks of developing a condition.

Hand-arm vibration arises from the use of hand-held power tools and is the cause of significant ill health (ie painful and disabling disorders of the blood vessels, nerves, joints and muscles of the hands and arms).

Whole body vibration is caused by habitually driving particular vehicles, and can cause back pain or worsen existing back problems.

The Vibration Procedure covers the effects and control of vibration in the workplace. It gives guidance on undertaking a workplace risk assessment, and how employees can reduce exposure to vibration.



## H13 – Vibration at Work

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### What is this?

This is a written procedure which covers the effects and control of vibration in the workplace.

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### The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

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### What are the types of vibration at work?

There are two main types of work-related vibration. They are:

- Hand-arm vibration; and
  - Whole body vibration.
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### Hand-arm vibration

Hand-arm vibration is a result of using hand-held power tools, and can be the cause of significant ill health which may take the form of painful disorders of the blood vessels, joints, nerves and muscles of the hands and arms.

Employees are particularly at risk if they operate:

- Hammer action tools for more than 15 minutes per day; or
- Rotary and other action tools for more than one hour per day.

### Symptoms:

- Loss of feeling in your fingers;
  - Fingers going white and red during exposure to hot or cold weather;
  - Numbness and tingling in fingers; and
  - Loss of dexterity in hands - inability to get a firm grip of objects.
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### Whole body vibration

Whole body vibration is transmitted from 'feet to seat' and it usually affects operators who drive mobile plant (tractors, dumpers, loading shovels, etc.).

### Symptoms:

- Aches and pains in upper body; and
  - Stiffness in the lower back.
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### What does the responsible manager need to do?

The responsible manager must:

- Undertake a risk assessment and identify where there might be a risk from vibration and who is likely to be affected. (This assessment must be undertaken by a competent person.)



- Consult employees and/or their safety representatives regarding the findings of the risk assessment.
  - Gather a reasonable estimate of his employees' exposure.
  - Endeavour to eliminate the use of all vibrating tools.
  - Reduce the amount of time regular operators spend inside mobile plant.
  - Introduce adequate control measures to minimise the risk associated with hand-arm and whole body vibration.
  - Install suspended seating within mobile plant to reduce the level of vibration experienced.
  - Maintain any haul roads to ensure all potholes are filled.
  - Ensure the fragmentation of blasted rock is adequate. This will reduce the necessity for the loading shovel to apply additional force to any fixed pieces of rock.
  - Provide adequate information, instruction and training to employees on the risks to health in relation to vibration at work.
  - Establish which employees require health surveillance.
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## What can employees do?

Employees can:

- Use suitable low-vibration tools.
  - Select the right tool for the job.
  - Check to see if tools are in good condition and have been properly maintained.
  - Keep cutting tools sharp so they remain efficient.
  - Reduce the amount of time they use one particular tool, and take frequent rest breaks.
  - Avoid gripping a tool too tightly.
  - Store tools in order that the handles do not become cold overnight.
  - Reduce the amount of time spent driving mobile plant.
  - Operate mobile plant in a controlled fashion.
  - Keep to traffic routes and adhere to site speed limits.
  - Follow the guidance given to them by their employer.
  - Report any concerns to their employer immediately.
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## Legislation

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
  - Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005
  - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
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