

HULLBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

CONTROL OF VIBRATION AT WORK POLICY

1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This Policy sets out the responsibilities of Hullbridge Parish Council (HPC) in relation to the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. HPC recognises and accepts its legal responsibility as an employer to protect all its employees from the ill health effects of exposure to hand arm and whole body vibration.

2 DEFINITIONS/EFFECTS OF HAV

2.1 Hand-Arm Vibration (HAV)?

HAV is vibration transmitted from work processes into the workers' hands and arms. It can be caused by operating hand-held power tools and hand guided equipment e.g. powered lawn mowers, pedestal grinders and chainsaws.

2.2 When is it Hazardous?

Regular and frequent exposure to hand-arm vibration can lead to permanent health effects. This is most likely when contact with a vibrating tool/work process is a regular part of a person's job. Occasional exposure is unlikely to cause injury. For some people, symptoms may appear after only a few months of exposure, but for others it may take years.

2.3 What injuries can HAV cause?

Too much exposure to HAV can cause hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) and carpal tunnel syndrome. HAVS affects the nerves, blood vessels, muscles and joints of the hand, wrist and arm. Injuries can be painful and disabling, for example:

- Painful finger blanching attacks (triggered by cold/wet conditions);
- Loss of sense of touch and temperature;
- Numbness and tingling;
- Loss of hand and finger dexterity;
- Clumsiness and inability to perform delicate tasks.

These injuries will not only affect an individual's ability to work, but will also impact on their home and social activities.

2.4 What is Whole-Body vibration?

Whole-body vibration is shaking or jolting of the body through a supporting surface such as a seat, or floor. For example when driving or riding on a vehicle along an unmade road or offroad e.g. ride-on lawn mowers.

In some cases unusually high vibration or jolting can aggravate an existing back problem e.g. a muscle strain caused by an accident when lifting a heavy object or during physical activity such as a sport.

2.5 RIDDOR

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
The group of diseases caused by exposure of the hands to vibration (Hand-arm vibration syndrome) are reportable diseases under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995.

3 THE LAW

- 3.1 The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 are intended to reduce the ill health effects caused by hand-arm and whole-body transmitted vibration and lays down several action limits.

Hand-Arm Vibration:

Employers are required to take action (including health surveillance) to reduce the person's risk when a daily exposure action value of 2.5m/s^2 is reached or exceeded over an 8 hour period. It is the employer's duty to ensure that an employee's daily exposure limit value of 5m/s^2 is not exceeded over an 8 hour period.

Whole-Body Vibration:

For whole-body vibration exposure values assuming an 8h working day are:

Exposure Action Value – 0.5m/s^2

Exposure Limit Value – 1.15m/s^2

- 3.2 Employers are required to take action to minimise employee's risk to whole body vibration exposure as detailed for hand-arm vibration.

4 PROCEDURE

- 4.1 To ensure that HPC meets its statutory duty regarding hand-arm and whole-body vibration under the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 it will:

- a) Assess the risk to all employees from all processes thought to involve regular exposure to vibration. The Risk Assessment process will consider:
- Type of work equipment
 - Tasks to be completed
 - Frequency of the task
 - Level of vibration period
 - Duration of exposure.
- (See 4.2 below for further details)*
- b) Take steps to reduce vibration exposure *(See 4.3 below)*

- c) Provide training, information and supervision to employees on the health risks from vibration, how to recognise and report symptoms, how to safely use the work equipment and the measures that are in place to control the risk. (See 4.4 below)
- d) Provide health surveillance where the risk assessment shows that this is appropriate. (See 4.5 below)

4.2 Risk Assessment

a) Risk Assessment requires:

- Assessment of the vibration magnitude from each piece of equipment used. This may be provided by the manufacturer: however, manufacturers' data will often come from testing under specific controlled conditions which are very different from normal working practices and therefore may significantly underestimate exposures in practice.
 - Measurement of vibration levels where published data is not available, and there is reason to believe that individual exposure is potentially close to the Exposure Limit Value (ELV).
 - Identification of who might be affected.
 - Calculation of vibration exposure for individuals, taking into account equipment used and length of time in use ('trigger time') The Health and Safety Executive have produced a 'calculator' which will enable conversion of working times and vibration magnitudes into an overall exposure factor. It will also enable the summation of exposures if more than one piece of equipment is used.
 - Identification of other risk factors, for example work in cold or wet environments increases the health risks from vibration exposure.
 - Consideration of individual factors. For example, the presence of some health conditions may increase risk from vibration exposure; the way some employees use equipment (posture, technique) may increase their vibration exposure from a particular activity by up to 50% compared to colleagues.
- b) The risk assessment includes an action plan which documents the measures already in place to reduce the risk from vibration exposure and any further measures planned.
 - c) Take immediate action when an employee's hand-arm exposure exceeds the daily exposure limit of $5\text{m/s}^2 \text{ A}(8)$ or when an employee's whole-body vibration exposure exceeds the daily exposure limit of $1.15 \text{ m/s}^2 \text{ A}(8)$.
 - d) The risk assessment should be reviewed if there is any change in vibration Exposure; and at least every 2 years otherwise.
 - e) HPC will appoint an external company to be responsible for carrying out detailed hand-arm vibration and whole-body measurements for any work equipment requiring testing.

4.3 Take steps to reduce vibration exposure

- a) Introduce a programme of appropriate control measures where there is likely to be a risk from exposure to vibration to eliminate/reduce this exposure to a minimum. Exposure will be maintained so far as is reasonably practicable to below the exposure limit values.
- b) If vibration levels are below the Exposure Action Value (EAV), consideration should be given as to whether further reduction is practical.
- c) Measures to reduce risks from vibration exposure may include:-
 - replacing tools and equipment with alternatives which produce lower magnitudes of vibration;
 - ensuring work activities are designed to take into account ergonomic principles,
 - and to encourage good posture;
 - ensuring all equipment is properly maintained;
 - reducing time exposed to vibration e.g. regular breaks, job rotation etc;
 - providing suitable clothing (PPE) to protect employees from cold and damp; and
 - providing suitable training and information for all those exposed to vibration.

4.4 Provide training, information and supervision to employees on the risks from vibration

- a) All HPC employees who are exposed to vibration will be given training to include:
 - The health effects of hand-arm vibration;
 - Sources of hand-arm vibration;
 - Whether they are at risk, and if so whether the risk is high (above the ELV), medium (above the EAV) or low;
 - The risk factors (eg the levels of vibration, daily exposure duration, regularity of exposure over weeks, months and years);
 - How to recognise and report symptoms;
 - The need for health surveillance, how it can help them remain fit for work, how you plan to provide it, how you plan to use the results and their confidentiality.
- b) Face-to-face training will be provided either by the HPC Health & Safety Officer if he/she is competent or will be arranged through an external company. Alternatively, training may be through use of leaflets and/or online guidance.
- c) Where new staff are employed, they will be made aware of the risks of vibration prior to first exposure, or at least within the first week of employment. This can be done at the same time as asking them to complete the initial health Assessment form for return to their Line Manager. In addition, all employees will be given appropriate training in the use of equipment.

4.5 Provide health surveillance where the risk assessment shows that this is appropriate

- a) HPC will provide health surveillance through Occupational Health (OH) to those employees assessed to be regularly exposed to hand–arm vibration levels above the action value.
- b) Health surveillance will also be offered to those exposed below the EAV if they are at increased risk e.g. if they report a pre-existing diagnosis of HAVS or any other condition of the hands, arms, wrists or shoulders, or any condition which affects circulation or nerve conduction such as diabetes, carpal tunnel syndrome etc.
- c) Health surveillance will involve:-
 - Initial assessment prior to or very soon after first exposure. This will usually be by questionnaire, with a referral to OH for follow-up where required.
 - Annual assessment. This will usually be by questionnaire, with a referral to OH for follow-up where required.
 - Face-to-face review with OH. This will be arranged if a questionnaire reveals symptoms, if an individual reports symptoms between health surveillance questionnaires or every 2 years otherwise.
- d) Health surveillance will be carried out by Occupational Health. All individual records will be held in confidence. Where appropriate, summary results for groups of employees will be reported back to the HPC Health & Safety Committee and the HPC Personnel Committee to indicate the effectiveness of vibration control.
- e) It is recommended that a final health check be carried out prior to the employee leaving employment.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Employer Responsibilities

Council/Health and Safety Committee

- Nominate a person(s) (usually the Clerk/Health & Safety Officer) to implement the compliance of the vibration regulations, and ensure they have the necessary skills and competence;
- Support the nominated person(s) in implementing measures to comply with the vibration regulations;
- Ensure all HPC managers and employees discharge their responsibilities in accordance with this policy.

Clerk/Health & Safety Officer

- Understand the scope and content of the Vibration regulations where this is relevant to work in their area;

- Ensure vibration factors are taken into account when hiring or purchasing new equipment;
- Ensure that necessary vibration risk assessments have been undertaken for any equipment used by those in their charge;
- Implement and enforce vibration control measures;
- Provide employees with the information they need, eg. manufacturers' instructions, operating manuals, training courses and check they understand them;
- Ensure employees are suitably trained and competent in all aspects of operating equipment, including vibration control;
- Ensure employees are aware and understand the importance of completing the appropriate log book relating to HAVs exposure and understand how to complete the log;
- Ensure equipment that falls under HAVs and Whole-body vibration is tested by an external company on a regular basis, the intervals between testing will depend on the type of equipment, how often it is used and environmental conditions;
- Keep and maintain a record of inspections and testing;
- Identify where health surveillance is required, and inform Occupational Health;
- Ensure new employees submit an initial questionnaire to their Line Manager within the first week of employment (or the first week of exposure);
- Obtain assurances from any external contractors contracted to work on behalf of HPC that they understand the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and that they have the necessary knowledge and competence they need to use and maintain equipment safely.

5.2 Employee Responsibilities

It is the duty of both HPC employees and external contractors contracted to work on behalf of HPC to exercise personal responsibility for health and safety matters. This includes:

- Using any control measures that HPC has put in place to reduce any risk from vibration exposure and immediately report any hand-arm/whole body vibration symptoms to your line manager;
- Using all equipment in accordance with manufacturers instruction and operating guidance;
- Inspecting equipment at regular intervals to make sure it is safe to operate, the intervals will depend on the type of equipment, how often it is used and environmental conditions;
- At the very least inspections should always be carried out before the equipment is used for the first time or after major repairs;
- Ensure all equipment is well maintained;
- Report details of inspections to HPC;
- Report any defects or difficulties to HPC with vibrating equipment;
- Co-operate with any programme of health surveillance which is identified by HPC as necessary following risk assessment.
- Co-operate and consent to the release of clinical information to ensure that any reportable disease reported to the HPC can be reported under RIDDOR.

Failure to observe this duty may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the employee/person concerned.

5.3 Occupational Health

- Provide health surveillance on request;
- Give feedback and guidance on risk to individuals following health surveillance;
- Feedback group results from health surveillance to the appropriate HPC manager;
- Advise the appropriate HPC manager if there are restrictions on an individual's ability to work due to health risks.

6 POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and a report will be considered by the HPC Finance, Policy and Appointments Committee.

March 2019