

'TOPIC INSPECTION PACK'

Wood dust:

Controlling inhalation exposure

Disease Reduction Programme (DRP)

2006 / 07

Version 1 – August 2006

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1. PURPOSE OF INTERVENTION

The Disease Reduction Programme (DRP) is part of the FIT3 Strategic Programme. The aim of the DRP is to reduce the incidence of work-related ill health caused by exposure to hazardous agents. Respiratory disease accounts for a significant proportion of work-related ill health, and a specific project has been set up to target this. The overall aim of the project is to achieve a 10% reduction in new cases of occupational asthma by 2007/08 compared with the 2003/04 baseline.

Accurate figures for occupational asthma in woodworking are hard to determine. The best available data from THOR¹ indicates that the overall average annual incidence for all occupational asthma over the 3 years 2002 – 2004 is 631. This represents a substantial decline in comparison to the early 1990s. However, these figures are thought to significantly underestimate the scale of the problem, by at least 3 to 5 times. This reflects under reporting and diagnoses that do not make a link to occupational exposure. Wood dust ranks fifth overall as an occupational asthmagen.

To support this initiative, HSE inspectors will inspect woodworking premises concentrating on control of exposure to wood dust. This inspection pack provides information for inspectors and an enforcement steer for the scenarios they are likely to find when visiting woodworking premises. The visits are intended to capitalise on the awareness raising work that has already been done at the Woodworking SHADs.

2. KEY MESSAGES

- To reduce dust at source e.g. by encouraging occupiers to consider ways to reduce the need for further finishing by more accurate machining, changing tooling, using different materials etc.
- To increase the take-up of vacuum systems to replace dry brushing and the use of airlines for removing wood dust from clothes, work areas and machinery.
- To improve compliance with the requirements to maintain and thoroughly examine LEV systems every 14 months
- To ensure that in addition to provision of LEV, appropriate RPE (FFP2/ FFP3 or equivalent for use with facial hair) is worn for particularly dusty tasks such as sanding.
- Ensure appropriate training and instruction is given regarding use of RPE
- Improve health surveillance uptake in the industry – ensure as a minimum pre-start and on going low-level health surveillance is in place. [High-level health surveillance will be required for significant exposures to dust from Western Red Cedar.]

3. WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES

Wood dust is a hazardous substance under COSHH 2002. Historically, hardwood dust was assigned a MEL of 5 mg/m³ – 8 Hr TWA and softwood dust was considered a nuisance dust with an OES of 10mg/m³ – 8Hr TWA. With the demise of OELs and MELs, both now have a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) of 5 mg/m³ – 8 Hr TWA. They also have a “sen” notification indicating they are capable of causing

¹ THOR (The Health and Occupation Reporting network) combines data from SWORD (Surveillance of Work-related and Occupational Respiratory Disease) generated by specialist respiratory physicians and OPRA (Occupational Physicians Reporting Activity) generated by occupational physicians.

occupational asthma. (In addition, hardwood dust has a “carc” notification, indicating it is capable of causing cancer.)

Employers should make a ‘suitable and sufficient’ assessment of the risks to health arising from exposure to wood dust (Reg 6). Exposure to substances that can cause occupational asthma or cancer must be reduced as low as is reasonably practicable [Reg 7.7 (c) (ii)]. This is best achieved by following the principles of good control practice set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations – see Appendix 1 for details.

4. ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT MODEL (EMM)

EMM was introduced to help inspectors reach a proportionate enforcement decision. It is used to determine the risk gap and inform risk-based compliance decisions. It also provides guidance regarding the Initial Enforcement Expectation (IEE), taking account of the available legal and technical guidance.

In terms of EMM, occupational asthma is described as a serious health effect. The benchmark standard is set as nil or negligible risk. For exposure to wood dust, this can be achieved by:

- a. eliminating the creation of dust at source (difficult to achieve in many situations); **OR**
- b. reducing the amount of dust generated at source;
- c. providing extracted enclosures or installing LEV at machinery where dust is likely to arise (in practice this will be at most if not all machines);
- d. using suitable Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) in combination with other control measures where appropriate, and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g. gloves;
- e. using suitable vacuum or dustless systems rather than airlines or sweeping to clean workpieces or clothes; and
- f. providing health surveillance.

Using EMM, exposures above the WEL for wood dust gives an **extreme risk** gap. To accommodate ALARP, exposure at the WEL for wood dust will produce a **substantial risk** gap. Extreme and substantial risks gaps have an initial enforcement expectation of an Improvement Notice.

5. INSPECTION GUIDELINES

Wood dust is generated whenever wood is machined – how much and the size of the particles depends on various factors including type of material (hard woods and MDF tend to be the worst), the type of cutter used, the speed of the cutters, how dry (seasoned) the wood is etc. Fine dust generally presents the greatest risk of sensitisation because it can penetrate further into the lungs.

Background

Wood dust is not generally well controlled in the industry. This is very clear from an HSL survey carried out in 2000. A total of 47 companies were visited and 386 personal dust samples were taken. The key findings were:

- The highest risk activities in terms of a) quantities of dust generated and b) particle size, continue to be circular saws and sanding. (This is in comparison to their previous survey in 1988 / 89). This is particularly so for portable equipment which tends not to be fitted with LEV;
- 27% of samples were $>5\text{mg}/\text{m}^3$ i.e. exceeding the MEL (now WEL) – this compares with 40% in the previous survey. However, it’s not clear whether this reflects an improvement, the limited sample size or some other function of the statistics;

- Only 34% of sites could produce a written COSHH assessment;
- 64% of sites used compressed airlines and 96% used hand brushing – neither should be carried out under COSHH;
- >80% of companies relied on RPE as a control measure, yet less than 8% had provided any training or instruction in its use;
- Only 21% of companies had 14 monthly test & examination of LEV carried out.

Woodworking Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

For the past four years, the Manufacturing Sector has used a contractor to deliver a series of SHADs. The half day sessions have focussed on four areas: a) machinery safety; b) tooling and training; c) manual handling and d) controlling wood dust. Attendance has been good and there has been much positive feedback. Unfortunately, evaluation visits have shown this has not translated into improved standards.

Findings mirror those of the HSL report. Compliance with COSHH continues to be poor, and, in particular, dry sweeping and the use of airlines to clear dust from workpieces remains widespread. Maintenance of LEV was also generally poor and statutory examinations were rarely carried out. Not surprisingly, health surveillance take up is low to non-existent.

Visit selection

Field staff are asked to visit SMEs in the following SIC codes:

20100	Sawmilling, planing and timber treatment
20200	Manufacture of veneers, boards etc.
20300	Manufacture of builders' joinery & carpentry
20400	Manufacture of wooden containers
20510	Manufacture of other products of wood
20520	Manufacture of articles of cork etc.
36110	Manufacture of chairs and seats
36120	Manufacture of office & shop furniture
36130	Manufacture of other kitchen furniture
36140	Manufacture of other furniture
36620	Manufacture of brooms and brushes

In particular, you should focus on firms

- Who have not attended previous SHADs,
- Who routinely carry out sanding, routing, profiling and high speed or fine cutting
- Who process large quantities of MDF
- That have not been visited in last 2 years or those with existing RCIs of 3 and 4²
- Where local knowledge has identified significant asthma risks

² with the exception of those who have recently attended a SHAD in Falkirk, Folkestone or Poole. One of the selling points to encourage attendance is that firms will not be visited in the following year.

The 06 / 07 Manufacturing Sector Business Group Delivery Programme calls for the following staff commitment:

- At Band 4 level – 260 visits, broken down nationally as follows:
 - WSW – 33
 - ESE – 56
 - London – 18
 - Midlands – 36
 - YNE – 42
 - NW – 42
 - Scot – 36

- The plan also allows for 180 days of HSAO time for organising SHADs (30 days) and follow-up / evaluation (150 days). This breaks down regionally as
 - WSW 24 days;
 - ESE 38 days;
 - London 19 days;
 - Mids 35 days;
 - YNE 23 days;
 - NW 20 days &
 - Scot 21 days.

6. INSPECTION TIPS

- **First impressions** will give a pretty good indication of the extent of dust control – conditions will range from very clean to premises where machines are literally buried under dust and off-cuts. **Note – the general tidiness is often a good barometer of how well other issues are being managed (or not as the case may be).**
- Ask about which types of job / machine / material create the most dust and focus on these. Don't forget that dry sweeping / use of airlines is a major contributor to the amount of respirable dust in the atmosphere.
- **Cleaning** – this should be 'dust free' i.e. using suitable vacuum cleaners or other dustless methods. The presence of brooms / brushes, sweep marks in dust on the floor and airlines all suggest poor practice. Is there any sort of 'cleaning regime' i.e. how is it done, by whom, what with and how often?
- **LEV** - are machines enclosed and fitted with LEV e.g. four / six cutters?
- Non-enclosed machines should be fitted with hoods and connected to central / stand alone system. Is the trunking in good condition or patched / full of holes? Are blanking plates fitted / used? Does it look well designed i.e. smooth not 90^o junctions, reduced trunking diameter to maintain flow rates at far end of system etc?
- Do employees know when to use LEV and have an idea about the basic principles to ensure it is most effective?
- **Correct type and use of RPE** – nuisance dust masks are not suitable protection against wood dust (P2 or P3 should be used). What information / training have employees had? In particular, what to wear, when and how to look after it (i.e. not hanging in the open workshop) and when to change filters etc. Tight fitting face pieces should not be worn on facial hair / beard.
- **Supervision** – What is supervisor / charge-hand's role in checking compliance with good work practices and use of extraction, vacuum cleaners etc. What action is taken if employees don't comply?

- What **information, training and instruction** have employees received about the health risks associated with wood dust? Have they experienced any respiratory or skin problems that they associate with wood dust? Do they know to go to their GP if they experience symptoms?
- Ask employees if they receive any **health surveillance** and, if so, what it entails and how often. If a responsible person has been nominated to undertake low-level health surveillance or to report ill health problems, speak to the individual to check their competence (Medical or Occupational Health Inspectors may advise).

Other health risks you may encounter

- **Toxic woods** - woods have a range of toxic properties – [see WIS 30 Toxic Woods](#)
- **Dermatitis** – some wood dust may cause dermatitis (see WIS 30) – typical precautionary measures are detailed in the MVR Topic Pack at section 1.10 – see link below and [Skin at work](#)
- **Isocyanates** – paints and lacquers containing isocyanates are widely used in some parts of the industry, particular furniture making. The same principles of control should be used as for paint spraying in MVR

Assessment of paperwork

Many businesses are unlikely to have much written down. However, you should ask to see copies of:


- COSHH / risk assessments (if > 5 employed);
- Health surveillance records (or summaries). Only low-level health surveillance (questionnaire based) is required for general wood dust. However, **high-level health surveillance must be in place where there is significant use of / exposure to western red cedar.**
- Test records for thorough examination of extraction equipment (COSHH Reg 9 - at least every 14 months);
- Any written instructions provided to employees covering:
 - Health hazards (i.e. asthma and dermatitis);
 - Signs and symptoms relating to asthma and dermatitis;
 - Procedure for reporting signs and symptoms;
 - Good practice work methods e.g. dust free cleaning;
 - Use and care of RPE
 - How to use any extraction provided
 - Cleaning – what to do / not to do

7. ENFORCEMENT GUIDANCE

Enforcement action taken to achieve effective control of wood dust exposure should be in accordance with the EMM taking local factors into account. The likely enforcement action for particular situations you are likely to encounter is described in the following table – you should read it in conjunction with [Appendix 1](#).

Observation/Regulation	Initial Enforcement Expectation (IEE) / Action
<p>COSHH assessment absent</p> <p>COSHH Regulation 6 (assessment)</p> <p>Factors to be considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference to the hazardous properties and health effects of exposure to wood dust • description of activities that lead to exposure including type and duration of exposure • number of employees or groups exposed • reference to the Workplace Exposure Limit • description of control measures and their effectiveness • results of airborne monitoring (if any) • results of health surveillance • review date 	<p>>5 employees</p> <p>A written COSHH assessment should be in place. However, the industry is renowned for operating in the absence of documented systems.</p> <p>If conditions are very poor an assessment will be required to enable understanding of the risks and the control measures required. IEE under these conditions is an IN for a written assessment.</p> <p>If conditions are reasonable/ good with LEV and other controls in place, letter/ advice to document their control strategy.</p> <p>< 5 employees</p> <p>Para 72 of the COSHH ACOP strongly advises occupiers to record the significant findings of their assessment</p> <p>Where conditions are poor, in the absence of a legal duty to have a “written assessment”, enforcement action is better directed towards improving control.</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 7.2</p> <p>Substitution</p> <p>In most woodworking scenarios, this is unlikely to be an option. Specific woods are used because their properties are particularly suitable for the product / environment in question. Western red cedar is very durable and highly weather resistant but also a particularly potent asthmagen. It is used for garden furniture and is now being specified for doors and frames.</p>	<p>Where Western red cedar is used, check that its potency as an asthmagen is understood and that the appropriate controls are in place. Ask if the properties of the wood are essential to their product, if not have they considered using a “safer” alternative?</p>

Observation/Regulation	Initial Enforcement Expectation (IEE) / Action
<p>COSHH Regulation 7.7(a) Schedule 2A</p> <p>Principle (c) Controls proportionate to the health risk</p> <p>Occupational asthma is considered a serious health effect. Exposure to wood dust should not exceed the WEL and be reduced ALARP.</p> <p>In the absence of LEV, the majority of woodworking machines will generate dust levels that exceed the WEL.</p> <p>Dry sweeping and airlines are often used to clear up wood dust. They are ineffective and produce high levels of atmospheric dust.</p>	<p>Woodworking machines should be fitted with LEV to capture dust at source. If it is absent, the IEE is an IN to provide it.</p> <p>This includes fine sanding as this produces the most hazardous dust. Down draft sanding benches can be fabricated and serviced by existing LEV systems.</p> <p>Vacuum or dustless methods such as damp cleaning should be used to clear up wood dust and remove it from workpieces etc.</p> <p>Where brushing and airlines are used, the IEE is an IN to introduce vacuum based or dustless methods.</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 7.7(a) Schedule 2A</p> <p>Principle (e) use of PPE to supplement LEV</p> <p>For particularly dusty tasks such as power/ hand sanding, LEV should be supplemented with appropriate PPE. Appropriate RPE should also be worn when changing bags on dust collection units.</p> <p>Nuisance or P1 dust masks are not suitable.</p>	<p>Where there is reliance on inappropriate RPE e.g. nuisance dust masks or a tight fitting face piece worn on facial hair/ beard, the IEE is an IN requiring provision and use of P2/ P3 dust masks or lightweight powered respirators.</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 7.7(a) Schedule 2A</p> <p>Principle (f) Check and review controls</p> <p>LEV effectiveness should be checked on a regular basis, for example, using a powerful torch as a dust lamp to check for leaks.</p>	<p>IEE – IVR/ letter advising of need to ensure that the LEV system delivers consistent, effective control.</p>

Observation/Regulation	Initial Enforcement Expectation (IEE) / Action
<p>COSHH Regulation 12 (1), Schedule 2A Principle (g) Information, instruction and training</p> <p>Employees should be aware of the health risks associated with exposure to wood dust and the control measures they should adopt.</p>	<p>Employees should be aware of the health risks associated with wood dust exposure and understand why it is important to use the control measures provided. They should know how to use the LEV, recognise when it is not working properly and know what to do when this is the case. They should also know how to wear RPE and ensure it is providing the intended level of protection.</p> <p>Where effective information, instruction and training are absent, the IEE is an IN.</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 7.7(a) Schedule 2A Principle (h) Controls measures should not increase overall risk</p> <p>Occupier should be aware that they should consider other risks e.g. fire and explosion when additional controls e.g. vacuum cleaners are introduced.</p>	<p>IEE – IVR/ letter re Risk assessment and checking the compatibility of new equipment with its supplier.</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 9 – Maintenance, examination and testing</p> <p>LEV systems should be maintained and thoroughly examined at least once every 14 months.</p>	<p>LEV not thoroughly examined at least every 14 months, the IEE is an IN</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 10 – Monitoring exposure.</p> <p>A dust lamp (MDHS 82) can be used to highlight airborne wood dust e.g. during sanding or escaping from LEV</p>	<p>IEE – monitoring is not normally required when principles of good practice have been implemented (effective LEV is in place and is maintained and thoroughly examined and supplemented with RPE where appropriate)</p>
<p>COSHH Regulation 11 – Health Surveillance</p> <p>Health surveillance should be in place where there is the potential for exposure to a respiratory sensitiser such as wood dust (HSE Guidance “MS 25 - Medical aspects of Occupational Asthma”)</p>	<p>For exposure to general wood dust:</p> <p>IEE – Advice/ steer to introduce low level (questionnaire based) health surveillance using the proformas </p> <p>Where significant amounts of Western Red cedar are used high- level health surveillance including lung function testing should be in place.</p> <p>If high level health surveillance is absent, the IEE is an IN (except for the self employed)</p>

Observation/Regulation	Initial Enforcement Expectation (IEE) / Action
<p>RIDDOR Cases of occupational asthma are reportable in the usual way to Incident Contact Centre, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG Tel: 0845 300 9923, Fax: 0845 300 9924, e-mail: riddor@natbrit.com</p>	

Matters of Evident Concern

Any visit focussing on dust control will involve looking at machinery. It follows that you will inevitably come across 'Matters of Evident Concern' in relation to machinery guarding and / or use. These should also be tackled during the visit. In particular, PUWER 1998 introduced requirements relating to the braking and tooling of woodworking machines. The National Enforcement Expectation (NEE) regarding these issues is set out below.


Braking

The following machines should now be braked:

- circular saws;
- cross-cut saws;
- single / double end tenoners;
- bandsaws;
- vertical spindle moulders (VSMs);
- planer / thicknessers; and
- hand-fed routers

In each case, the NEE is IN **unless**:

- There is no safety benefit from braking a machine e.g. – the machine is within an interlocked enclosure with guard locking or there is no access to the blade during run down;
- An existing manual brake is adequate;
- Rundown time is less than 10 sec;
- The machine is manufactured to a harmonised European Standard

Further guidance on retrofitting of braking is contained in [Woodworking Information Sheet 38](#) 

Tooling

The following hand fed machines should now be using chip limited tooling compliant with BS EN 847-1:

- VSMs (inc power fed)
- tenoning machines, and
- routers.

If not, the NEE is an IN.

Notice Templates

Generic templates for wood dust are available on the 'Inspection' intranet page

8. RISK CONTROL INDICATORS

The three most relevant indicators to measure performance against are set out below. **However, Inspectors should bear the following factors in mind when dealing with occupiers and tailor their approach accordingly.**

- Most firms in the sector are small – nearly 70% have no employees i.e. sole proprietorships or partnerships of self-employed owner-managers.

- People in the industry have a practical approach to problem solving and tend towards a ‘verbal’ rather than ‘written’ culture. In other words, they do not use the ‘expert’ model of risk assessment followed by risk management which underpins most health and safety legislation, particularly COSHH.
- Occupier knowledge of the health risks arising from wood dust is limited and tends to focus on the toxicity of certain hardwoods. Paradoxically, the need for LEV is quite widely accepted in the industry and often encountered even in the most basic of premises. On the other hand, it is frequently not maintained. Although occupiers may not recognise the health benefits, they are well aware of housekeeping and fire prevention spin-offs.
- Basic machinery guarding and the safe use of woodworking machines continue to be significant issues in large parts of the industry.

(a) Management – there is evidence of effective organisation and arrangements including adequate COSHH assessments, provision of information, training and supervision and evidence of management commitment.

A score of 1 if all above are in place. A score of 4 where enforcement is required. A score of 3 - enforcement may be appropriate.

(b) Control Strategy – there is evidence that substitution has been considered and effected where possible, effective engineering controls have been provided and maintained, suitable RPE is provided, worn correctly (face fit test undertaken where appropriate). Appropriate training provided regarding use and maintenance of engineering controls/RPE.


A score of 1 where hierarchical approach to control has been taken, and exposure to wood dust has been either prevented or adequately controlled to a level as low as reasonably practicable. A score of 4 - enforcement is required. Score 3 - enforcement may be appropriate.





(c) Health Surveillance – a competent person should manage a programme of appropriate health surveillance. If you have any concerns regarding the competency of this person, you will need specialist advice and support.

The enforcement line supported by HSE’s Occupational Health and Medical Specialists for the provision of health surveillance is set out in the table on page 11.

A score of 1 should be allocated where appropriate health surveillance is provided and effectively managed. A score of 4 indicates that enforcement action is appropriate. In the case of exposure to “general wood dust” (not including Western Red Cedar), then the enforcement expectation is a “steer and guidance” towards low level, questionnaire based health surveillance. A score of 4 where there is a health risk from Western Red Cedar requires and IN to introduce and manage a programme of high-level health surveillance.

9. Further Guidance

- [HSE web site section on woodworking](#)
- [COSHH Essentials control sheets](#) - cover engineering controls and health surveillance (see [Appendix 2](#)).
- Sector Information Minute – SIM 03/2006/13
- Woodworking Information Sheets (WISs)
 - [Wood dust: hazards and precautions](#)  - woodworking information sheet 1

- [COSHH and the woodworking industries](#)  - woodworking information sheet 6
- [Selection of respiratory protective equipment suitable for use with wood dust](#)  - woodworking information sheet 14 [64kb]
- [LEV: general principles of system design](#) - woodworking information sheet 23
- [LEV: dust capture at sawing machines](#)  - woodworking information sheet 24
- [LEV: dust capture at fixed belt sanding machines](#)  - woodworking information sheet 25 [7kb]
- [LEV: dust capture at fixed drum and disc sanding machines](#) - woodworking information sheet 26

- COSHH Essentials COSHH ACoP (Fifth edition), L5
- [Woodworking web page](#) on HSE website

Appendix 1

COSHH Regulations 2002 (as amended) – Eight principles of good practice for the control of exposure to substances hazardous to health.




COSHH Regulation 7(7) – Schedule 2A

- a) Design and operate processes and activities to minimise emission, release and spread of substances hazardous to health
- b) Take into account all relevant routes of exposure – inhalation, skin absorption and ingestion – when developing control measures
- c) Control exposure by measures that are proportionate to the health risk
- d) Choose the most effective and reliable control options which minimise the escape and spread of substances hazardous to health
- e) Where adequate control of exposure cannot be achieved by other means, provide, in combination with other control measures, suitable personal protective equipment
- f) Check and review regularly all elements of control measures for their continuing effectiveness
- g) Inform and train all employees on the hazards and risks from the substances with which they work and the use of control measures
- h) Ensure that the introduction of control measures does not increase the overall risk to health and safety



Appendix 2 – COSHH Essentials - Direct Control Sheets

The guidance sheets listed below provide the necessary information for effectively controlling exposure to wood dust in the workplace.



Sawing

- [Bandsaws WD01](#) 
- [Circular bench saws WD02](#) 
- [Cross-cut saws WD03](#) 




Shaping

- [Shaping Vertical spindle moulders WD04](#) 
- [Shaping Overhead and CNC routers WD05](#) 

Sanding

- [Sanding machines WD06](#) 
- [Hand-held sanding machines WD07](#) 

Other

- [Woodwork Furniture assembly WD08](#) 
- [Woodwork Stand-alone dust collectors \(occasional use\) WD09](#)  - This should be read in conjunction with [G204](#) 

Appendix 3 – Inspection Aide Memoire

1 Exposure	Notes
Number of employees exposed	Consider shift lengths, patterns and nature of work – production jobs are likely to generate a lot more dust than one off bespoke jobs
2 Process	Notes
Types of material used	Hardwood, softwood or composite materials such as medium density fibreboard (MDF). Many woods have toxic or irritant properties
Types of machines / processes	e.g. circular saw, planer, band saw, cross-cut saw, moulding/shaping, routing, tenoning, turning, sanding, assembly. Hand sanding (with power sanders) and routing of MDF in particular will produce large quantities of fine dust.
3 Work environment	Notes
Cleaning and housekeeping – clean / dirty workplace. Information on the cleaning regime i.e. how is it done, by whom, the method and frequency of cleaning?	Excessive wood dust accumulation will be easy to see. Machinery and work area should be cleaned every day using a vacuum cleaner. General workrooms should be cleaned once a week. For further details see CE – WD02
4 Assessment (COSHH Reg 6)	Notes
Does the company have a suitable and sufficient COSHH assessment?	In writing, if more than 5 employees. Ideally it should cover cleaning and maintenance as well as production. Research suggests there isn't any correlation between having an assessment and conditions being better.
Are the company aware of what the exposure limit is for wood dust?	Both hardwood dust and softwood dust have been assigned a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) of 5 mg/m ³ , 8-hour TWA. Both hardwood and softwood have been assigned a notation 'sen' and in addition 'carc' for hardwoods.
Is company aware of ill health effects associated with exposure to wood dust?	Knowledge is likely to be low. While main issues are asthma and dermatitis, cancer may be an issue, depending on process / material used. However, this is extremely rare. See Woodworking information Sheets Nos. 1 & 30

5 Control of Exposure (COSHH Reg 7)	Notes
Is Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) provided to remove dust at source?	LEV needs to be properly designed to be effective - Woodworking Information Sheets and CE Control guidance Sheets: WD01- WD09, FD14, 204 and 402 set out the basic principles
Does the system appear to be effective in capturing and removing dust?	Presence of large quantity of dust will be a clear indicator that it does not work properly or is not routinely used. Look for signs of damage – trunking is frequently in poor condition which will reduce effectiveness dramatically
Are hand-held sanding machines or tools used?	Where possible, sanders/tools with on-tool extraction should be used - ideally connected to a Type H vacuum cleaner or centralised extraction unit. On-tool filter bags perform less well. Workers are likely to need RPE during sanding unless fitted with effective on-tool extraction. See CE- WD07
Is the LEV a recirculating system?	e.g. an individual sock filter, return air via ducting, etc. Ideally recirculating systems should have a way to monitor the continuing effectiveness of the system e.g. an alarm, divert, air monitoring, etc. In practice you are unlikely to encounter this, but the company may have their own rough rule of thumb to judge this by.

6 Use of Controls (COSHH Reg 8)	Notes
Is there evidence of inappropriate work practices?	e.g. dry sweeping of wood dust and the use of airlines to clear dust from work pieces, machinery and clothing.
Are the control measures identified and used correctly?	e.g. LEV, RPE
Is PPE, including RPE worn, where necessary?	Assigned protection factor P2 or P3 standard of RPE should be used. See CE- Control guidance sheets WD06-08
Are good hygiene standards practiced / enforced?	Vacuum based system or dustless methods such as damp cleaning to replace compressed airlines and dry sweeping for removing wood dust.
Are the workers provided with appropriate RPE taking into account the worker, job and the environment?	Common issues include operators wearing nuisance dust masks or tight fitting face pieces worn on facial hair / beards
Have the workers been trained in how to don respirators properly?	Giveaways signs are ill fitting masks, straps in incorrect position, evidence of tampering
Face-fit testing for RPE, where tight fitting face piece is worn?	Any training given? Only a qualitative method for face-fit testing is required, but the higher standard of a quantitative method may be used. Manufacturer / supplier can usually provide Kits. See OC 282/28

RPE storage	RPE should be stored in a clean area, not be left on work areas when not in use – this is a common problem which renders the RPE a) pointless as the dust is already on the inside and b) unpleasant to wear – net result: no one wears it.
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7 Maintenance, examination and testing (COSHH Reg 9)	Notes
Are engineering controls (e.g. LEV) examined and tested at least once every 14 months by a competent person (in practice usually someone from firm's insurance Co?)	Although this is a legal requirement it is frequently not observed. Records of tests / thorough examination should be available and kept for 5 years
Is a weekly check of engineering controls carried out?	In an ideal world this should include a) visual checks using smoke tube or dust lamp; b) velocity measurements using an anemometer & c) measurement of static pressure behind the hood. Full details are contained in CE-WD06. In practice, you are unlikely to see this.
How is waste removed from small dust extraction units? (Large cyclone units will be located in the yard which will be well ventilated and dust removal is likely to be more automated. Consequently health risks will be lower, but you should be aware there may be significant fire risks with these units if they are not operated properly.	If done incorrectly, high dust exposure is likely. Consider how often bins silos are emptied, how the bin will be lifted for emptying, and provision of mechanical help, if necessary. Correct RPE should be worn where necessary.

8 Health surveillance (COSHH Reg11)	Notes
Are any health checks carried out on those exposed to wood dust?	For most woods, a low level of health surveillance is sufficient. e.g. questionnaire, skin inspection. See CE- 402
Is the company aware of any recent or current respiratory problems in the workforce?	

Does the company use western red cedar ? If yes, is there a high-level health surveillance in place?	Western red cedar is has very good resistance to weather and rot – it tends to be used for sheds and garden furniture. Its asthmagenic properties are well recorded. A higher level of health surveillance, including lung function testing, is needed where there is significant exposure to western red cedar. See CE- 402
Are health records kept?	Not to be confused with medical records.
Does the employer understand his/her responsibilities under RIDDOR?	i.e. to report cases of occupational asthma / dermatitis

9 Information, instruction and training (COSHH Reg 12)	Notes
Has adequate information, instruction and training been provided to employees?	<p>Employees should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the risks to health as a result of exposure to wood dust (asthma, dermatitis & cancer) • the early signs and symptoms of harm from wood dust • the precautions that should be taken to prevent / reduce exposure • appropriate use of LEV and RPE • who to report problems to such as defects in LEV / PPE and any health problems

10 Welfare Facilities	Notes
Are the washing facilities adequate?	Facilities should be clean and provided with soap hot water, washbasin & towels. Basic stuff, but amazingly still a problem for some companies

11 Guidance / information	Notes
How do firms get their information?	e.g. hard copies documents such as COSHH General ACOP, COSHH Essentials (CE) - Woodworking Control Guidance Sheets, Woodworking Information Sheets (WIS), Maintenance of LEV (HSG 54), the British Woodworking Federation's 'Guide to Health and Safety in the Woodworking Industry'. Again, don't expect possession of these documents to be linked to any better conditions or understanding of the issues. What alternative sources of information / expertise do they access e.g. internet sites, trade press, insurance companies, H&S consultants etc?