

WDO

COSHH essentials for
woodworkers

Advice for managers

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) require employers to ensure that exposure is prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled. This guidance gives practical advice on how this can be achieved by applying the principles of good practice for the control of exposure to substances hazardous to health, as required by COSHH.

It is aimed at people whose responsibilities include the management of substances hazardous to health at work (eg occupational health specialists, anyone undertaking COSHH assessments, supervisors and is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives). It will help you carry out COSHH assessments, review existing assessments, deliver training and supervise activities involving substances hazardous to health.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, 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.

See Essential information near the end of the sheet.

Introduction

HSE have produced these advice sheets to help employers assess and control risks from hazardous substances in the workplace. For some common tasks the sheets take into account the health hazards (and exposure potential) of substances used or produced to identify an approach appropriate to control the risks.

The WD series of control guidance sheets describe good practice for controlling exposure to wood dust in the woodworking industry. The sheets cover the key points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level. This is achieved by following good control practice (i.e. follow all points described in the sheets or use equally effective measures), by reducing wood dust exposure to below the relevant workplace exposure limit (WEL) and to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

WD1	Bandsaw	WD10	Wall saw
WD2	Circular bench saw	WD11	Surface planer
WD3	Cross-cut saw	WD12	Fixed sanding machines (narrow belt)
WD4	Vertical spindle moulder	WD13	Fixed sanding machines (disc)
WD5	Overhead and CNC routers	WD14	Fixed sanding machines (drum)
WD6	Withdrawn - replaced by WD12,13 and 14	WD15	Chop saw
WD7	Sanding machines (hand held)	WD16	Withdrawn
WD8	Withdrawn	WD17	Suction hose
WD9	Withdrawn		

What the sheets cover

Reducing exposure to an adequate level always involves a mixture of equipment and ways of working. This means employers should:

- choose the most effective and reliable control measures;
- ensure they are used properly by instructing, training and supervising workers;
- ensure they keep on working by maintaining the control measures;
- check and review all elements of control measures regularly for their continued effectiveness.

Each sheet gives advice on how to achieve this for a particular task.

Hazards

Wood dust is made up of tiny particles of wood produced during processing. Wood dust can also contain bacteria, fungal and moss spores. The amount and type of wood dust generated will depend on the wood being cut and the machine you are using, eg:

- whether the timber is green or seasoned which will affect the moisture content;
- whether it is a hardwood, softwood or composite board; and
- how aggressive the machining process is, eg blade profile.

The following activities are likely to produce high dust exposures, some over long periods:

- machining operations, particularly sawing, routing and turning;
- sanding by machine and by hand;
- hand assembly of machined or sanded components;
- processing composite boards, eg medium-density fibreboard (MDF);
- bagging dust from dust extraction systems;

When cleaning up, compressed airlines and dry sweeping should be avoided as these will create high levels of dust in cloud that are redistributed in the workplace.

How to use the sheets

- Consider the processes/tasks and hazardous substances in your workplace.
- Look for opportunities to substitute with less hazardous materials.
- Examine the advice sheets for each of the tasks.
- Examine the essential information sheets listed on each advice sheet.
- Compare operations in your workplace with recommendations in the advice sheets for all of the relevant tasks.
- Record your findings (this forms part of your risk assessment).
- Record any actions you need to take covering: issues identified, planned actions, target completion date, person responsible, status of any issues, and a review of effectiveness.
- Keep a record of your actions to prevent exposure of workers to hazardous materials.

You may have to change old working practices or spend money on new controls. Decide how best to make any changes required 'across the board'. If you are in doubt, seek expert help, don't give up! Ask your trade association, trade union or contact a consultant (see Further information).

Essential information

You can find the full COSHH essentials series at www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/index.htm

HSE publication EH40/2005 Workplace Exposure Limits:
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/eh40.pdf

Health surveillance, monitoring and sampling sheets are available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/gseries.htm

Further information

Local exhaust ventilation (LEV) workplace fume and dust extraction
web page: www.hse.gov.uk/lev

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) web page:
www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment

*Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical
guide* HSG53 (Fourth edition) HSE Books 2013
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/HSG53.htm

*Controlling airborne contaminants at work: A guide to
local exhaust ventilation (LEV)* HSG258 HSE Books 2011
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg258.htm

Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register www.oshcr.org/

For information about health and safety, visit <https://books.hse.gov.uk>
or <http://www.hse.gov.uk>

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the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

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commissioning@wlt.com

