

# WD17

COSHH essentials for  
woodworkers

## Suction hose attachment for cleaning

Control approach **Engineering control** and  
**Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)**

**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.**

### What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good control practice using a suction hose for cleaning.

It covers the key points you need to follow to reduce exposure to wood dust to an adequate level.

This is achieved by following good control practice (i.e. follow all points described in this sheet 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.

This sheet doesn't cover other health and safety risks. Further information on these can be found on the HSE woodworking web pages: [www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/)

### Hazards

- ✓ Cleaning can produce high dust levels.
- ✓ Wood dust includes dust from hardwood, softwood and composite boards such as medium-density fibreboard (MDF).
- ✓ Wood dust can cause, dermatitis, serious lung diseases including asthma and cancer.
- ✓ The dermatitis risk is higher for softwoods.
- ✓ The WEL for both hardwood and softwood dust is detailed in HSE publication EH40/2005 Workplace Exposure Limits: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/eh40.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/eh40.pdf)
- ✓ For mixtures of hardwood and softwood dusts the WEL for hardwood dust applies to all dusts in the mixture.

### Access to work area

- ✓ Allow access to authorised and appropriately trained people only.

### Equipment and procedures

- ✓ Use suction hose attachments that can be fitted to extraction, also known as local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems, effectively using the extraction system and associated dust collector as a vacuum cleaner to remove wood dust from the floor.
- ✓ Maintain all rubber seals in good condition.
- ✓ The suction hose should be at least 100mm diameter to prevent blockage by wood chips.
- ✓ Keep the extraction system simple and robust in design (see WIS23 for further details).
- ✓ Ensure connections between the suction hose and the LEV system are secure.
- ✓ Fit an air flow indicator to the connecting ductwork to show ongoing performance.

- ✓ Provide adequate clean 'make up air' into the workplace to replace extracted air.

### Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- ✓ Provide RPE with a UK Standard Assigned Protection Factor (APF) of at least 20.
- ✓ RPE is also needed for maintenance and cleaning.
- ✓ Fit testing is required for RPE with a tight fitting face seal.
- ✓ Workers wearing tight fitting RPE must be clean shaven and trained how to fit it properly and look after it.
- ✓ Tell workers to discard disposable RPE at the end of the shift, or sooner if their RPE becomes blocked with dust.
- ✓ Change the filters on respirators in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations and if:
  - the shelf-life expiry date has passed;
  - they are damaged or visibly contaminated; or
  - they become harder to breathe through.
- ✓ Examine and test non-disposable RPE thoroughly at least once every month and record this.
- ✓ Tell workers to check RPE is working properly before every use and record this.
- ✓ If RPE is required for extended periods, eg longer than 1 hour, use powered respirators or constant flow airline breathing apparatus.
- ✓ Make suitable arrangements for maintenance, storage and replacement of RPE.

### Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Ask your supplier to advise on suitable PPE.
- ✓ Consult workers to ensure PPE will be suitable for them.
- ✓ Provide coveralls that do not retain dust.
- ✓ Use a contract laundry or a suitable equivalent to wash work clothing. Don't allow workers to do this at home.
- ✓ If required select gloves that are suitable for control of health risks (dermatitis) and safety risks (disintegrate to detach from the hand if they become entangled).
- ✓ Tell workers to change and discard damaged gloves immediately.
- ✓ Make suitable arrangements for maintenance, storage and replacement of PPE.

### Personal decontamination

- ✓ Provide warm water, mild skin cleansers, and soft paper or fabric towels for drying. Avoid abrasive cleansers.
- ✓ Provide pre-work skin creams, which will make it easier to wash dirt from the skin.
- ✓ Provide after-work creams to replenish skin oils.

**Caution: 'Barrier creams' are not 'liquid gloves' and do not provide a full barrier.**

## Health surveillance

- ✓ Consult an occupational health professional on the level of health surveillance required.

## Training and supervision

- ✓ Provide supervision – ensure that safe work procedures are followed.
- ✓ Tell workers about the hazards associated with their work and how to recognise early signs of asthma and dermatitis.
- ✓ Provide workers with training on:
  - working safely with hazardous substances;
  - when and how to use controls;
  - how to check they are working;
  - how the LEV system works;
  - how to use the LEV to get the best out of it;
  - how to check that the LEV is working; and
  - what to do if something goes wrong.
- ✓ Consider keeping training records.
- ✓ Have a procedure to check that control measures are in place and being followed.
- ✓ Involve managers and supervisors in health and safety training.

## Essential information

You can find the full COSHH essentials series at [www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/index.htm)

HSE publication EH40/2005 Workplace Exposure Limits:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/eh40.pdf](http://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](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/gseries.htm)

*Health surveillance for occupational asthma* COSHH Guidance Sheet G402 HSE Books 2011 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g402.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g402.pdf)

*Health surveillance for occupational dermatitis* COSHH Guidance Sheet G403 HSE Books 2011 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g403.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g403.pdf)

*New and existing engineering control systems* COSHH Guidance Sheet G406 HSE Books 2011 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g406.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g406.pdf).

*Exposure measurement: Air sampling* COSHH Guidance Sheet G409 HSE Books 2011 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g409.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/g409.pdf)

*UK Standard Assigned Protection Factor 20 (APF 20)* COSHH Guidance Sheet RHSE 2016 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/rpe3.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/rpe3.pdf)

## Further Information

Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register [www.oshcr.org/](http://www.oshcr.org/)

*Preventing contact dermatitis and urticaria at work* Leaflet INDG233(rev2) HSE 2015 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg233.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg233.htm)

*Clearing the air: A simple guide to buying and using local exhaust ventilation (LEV)* Leaflet INDG 408 HSE 2008 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg408.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg408.htm)

*Supervising for safety in woodworking Are you as good as you think you are?* Leaflet INDG 440 HSE 2010 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg440.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg440.htm)

*Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide*  
HSG53 (Fourth edition) HSE Books 2011  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/HSG53.htm](http://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](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg258.htm)

HSE's LEV web page: [www.hse.gov.uk/lev/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/lev/)

HSE's RPE web page:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/index.htm)

HSE's woodworking webpage:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/wooddust.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/wooddust.htm)

*Selection of respiratory protective equipment suitable for use with wood dust* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS14 HSE 2014  
[www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/wis.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/wis.htm)

*Wood dust: Controlling the risk* Woodworking Information Sheet WIS23 HSE 2012  
[www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/wis.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/wis.htm)

*Industrial ventilation: A manual of recommended practice for design*  
ACGIH 2015 [www.acgih.org](http://www.acgih.org)

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

You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

To report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, email:  
[commissioning@wlt.com](mailto:commissioning@wlt.com)

### Employee checklist

- Do you understand the health hazards associated with your work?
- Is the extraction switched on and working properly, with the baffle plate fully open? Check the airflow indicator has the correct reading.
- Check that any RPE works properly every time you use it.
- Check for signs of leaks, wear and damage in RPE and LEV before every job.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor. Don't just carry on working.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.
- Use, maintain and store your PPE in accordance with instructions.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking, smoking, using the lavatory and after work.
- Use skin creams provided as instructed.
- Be aware of early signs or symptoms of ill health related to wood dust and report them as soon as possible.