



Coming Soon to Your Equipment – the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations

Although pneumatic and vibratory tools have been used in all industries for years, only recently have the full extent of the risks been realised. Injuries such as chronic back pain, vibration white finger, carpal tunnel syndrome and sensory nerve damage and many other symptoms of ill-health can be caused through excessive exposure to plant or equipment that vibrates.

With this in mind, proposals are now in place to increase the duties of employers in this regard, with the likely introduction of the *Control of Vibration at Work Regulations*.

The Current Situation

At present, there are no specific legal provisions requiring employers to control exposure in the workplace. However, assessments should already be made of potential exposure under the *Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998*.

The changes in the near future will likely include the need for an employer to provide specific control measures whenever an employee's exposure to vibration is likely to exceed an Exposure Action Value (EAV) and that levels do not exceed a specific Exposure Limit Value (ELV). Separate levels of vibration will apply to both Hand Arm Vibration (HAV's) and Whole Body Vibration (WBV's).



- Knowing which items of equipment pose the highest risk to your employees;
- Setting your own policy based on recognised exposure limits for the use of this equipment;
- Providing Information Instruction and Training on vibration risks to your employees;
- Recording the exposure to your employees;
- Provide Health Surveillance where required.

The basis of any good risk assessment is to avoid the risk wherever possible. However, if the job cannot be done without exposure to vibration equipment make sure the following steps are taken:

- **Select** - select equipment that produces the least possible vibration;
- **Maintain** - good maintenance can reduce vibration levels considerably;
- **Train** - make your operatives aware of the risks and the precautions, such as gripping tools properly;
- **Inform** - provide up to date information on the vibration risks;
- **Review** - review the use of vibrating equipment as technological advances are made available.



When will these changes take effect?

The likely date for introduction of these standards is July 2005. New equipment introduced before July 2007 will have until July 2010 to comply with these values. Equipment introduced after July 2007 will be required to be comply with the new standards immediately, however the transitional periods, indicated may be subject to change by the HSC when legislation is introduced.

As an employer, what do I need to do?

Assessing the risks associated with vibration is already a legal requirement. Ensure you have a regime for:

- Understanding the risks associated with tools that vibrate;

For more information on this or any other health, safety or environmental matter, feel free to call us on **01908 255909**, we would be pleased to help.

