

# SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK (SSOW)

## Title and Document Control

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Safe System of Work – Hand-Arm Vibration (HAV)</b>
<b>Document Status:</b>	Controlled document (uncontrolled if printed or copied)
<b>Document Reference:</b>	SSOW-HAV-001
<b>Version:</b>	1.0
<b>Linked Awareness Course:</b>	Hand-Arm Vibration Safety Awareness – referenced for context only

**Important Notice** This document defines the approved Safe System of Work (SSOW) for activities that may expose workers to hand-arm vibration. It is not training, does not confirm competence, and does not authorise any person to carry out work. Management retain full ownership and control of this SSOW.

## Scope and Task Limits

### This SSOW applies to:

- Routine workplace activities involving handheld or hand-guided vibrating tools and equipment
- Use of powered hand tools (e.g. grinders, sanders, impact tools, breakers)
- Tasks where vibration is transmitted through tools, machinery, or materials being worked on

### This SSOW does not apply to:

- Specialist occupational health assessment or diagnosis of HAVS or CTS
- Medical surveillance decision-making (managed separately by occupational health)
- Non-work-related vibration exposure

Where exposure cannot be adequately controlled within this SSOW, work must be escalated for further assessment and management review.

## Roles, Authorisation and Competence

- This SSOW is issued, owned, and controlled by management.
- Managers are responsible for ensuring vibration risks are assessed and controlled.

- Only persons authorised by management may undertake work involving vibrating tools.
- Awareness training alone does not confirm competence or authorisation.
- Authorisation may be task-specific, site-specific, or time-limited and may be withdrawn at any time.

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## Hazards Identified

- Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)
- Nerve, vascular, muscle, and joint damage
- Loss of grip strength and dexterity
- Increased risk of secondary injury due to reduced sensation

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## Mandatory Control Measures

The following controls **must** be implemented and enforced:

### Exposure and Planning Controls

- Vibration exposure must be reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable.
- Exposure times must be monitored and controlled using agreed systems (e.g. usage logs or points systems).
- Tasks must be planned to minimise continuous vibration exposure.

### Equipment Controls

- Low-vibration tools must be selected where reasonably practicable.
- Tools must be suitable for the task and used only as intended.
- Tools and equipment must be maintained in accordance with manufacturer instructions.
- Faulty tools or those producing abnormal vibration must be removed from service immediately.

### Work Method Controls

- Tools must be used efficiently and without excessive force.
- Operators must avoid gripping tools more tightly than necessary.
- Workpieces should be supported to reduce the need for force.
- Tasks should be rotated to reduce individual exposure durations.

### Environmental Controls

- Cold and damp conditions must be controlled where practicable.
- Tools must be stored to prevent excessively cold handles.
- Suitable welfare arrangements must be available to maintain warmth.

## PPE Controls

- Suitable gloves may be provided to protect against cold and secondary risks.
- Anti-vibration gloves must not be relied upon as the primary vibration control measure.

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## Prohibited Practices

The following must not occur:

- Use of faulty, poorly maintained, or inappropriate tools
- Modification or removal of vibration dampers or safety features
- Use of blunt, worn, or incorrect consumables
- Excessive gripping or forcing of tools or workpieces
- Use of tools for tasks they are not designed for
- Failure to attend required health surveillance when instructed

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## Stop-Work and Escalation

Work must stop immediately if:

- Tools become defective or vibration levels increase unexpectedly
- Exposure controls cannot be implemented or monitored
- Symptoms of HAVS or CTS are reported or observed
- Conditions change in a way that increases risk

Concerns must be escalated and reported in line with site procedures.

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## Supervision, Monitoring and Review

- Supervisors are authorised to stop work where controls are not effective.
- Compliance with this SSOW must be actively monitored.
- This SSOW must be reviewed following reported symptoms, incidents, changes in equipment, work methods, or guidance.