

SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK (SSOW)

Title and Document Control

Title:	Safe System of Work – Hand-Arm Vibration (HAV)
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Linked Awareness Course:	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 - Authorisation may be task-specific, site-specific, or time-limited and may be withdrawn at any time.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.

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.