

## Document Control Sheet

<b>Document title</b>	Policy on Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome
<b>Summary of purpose</b>	Required by the HSE: sets out the Council's intentions with regards to the management of hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS)
<b>Prepared by</b>	Gill Gibson
<b>Status</b>	
<b>Version number</b>	1
<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Approval date</b>	
<b>Date of implementation</b>	
<b>Review frequency</b>	3 years
<b>Next review date</b>	February 2024
<b>Circulation</b>	CLT, Full Council and staff
<b>Published on the Council's website</b>	No – internal policy only

**Validity Statement**

This document is due for review by the date shown above, after which it may become invalid. Users of the strategy or policy should ensure that they are consulting the currently valid version of the document.



MALDON DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

**Policy on Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome**

at

**Maldon District Council**

**Statement of Intent**

It is the Council's intention to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees and all others who may be affected by its work activities.

In relation to hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS), it will: -

- take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of its employees who are/will be exposed to vibration in the course of their employment;
- ensure that any risks are reduced to a minimum so far as is reasonably practicable;
- ensure that employees who use vibrating equipment receive adequate information, instruction and training on the hazards, risks and controls to manage this;
- undertake annual occupation health surveillance for employees who are at risk from using vibrating equipment.

Signed:

Leader of the Council

Director of Service Delivery

Date:

## Responsibilities for Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome

Designation	Responsibilities
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To agree the policy on hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS).</li> <li>• To be made aware of significant issues in relation to the management of HAVS.</li> <li>• To ensure adequate resources are allocated when setting budgets and determining capital expenditure to manage the hazards and risks of HAVS.</li> </ul>
Directors and Operational Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure effective management structures and arrangements are in place to deliver policy and procedures in relation to the hazards and risks of hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) within their area of responsibility.</li> <li>• To ensure that staff within their area of responsibility are aware of their health and safety responsibilities in relation to HAVS.</li> <li>• To ensure appropriate action is taken where employees fail to fulfil their health and safety obligations.</li> <li>• To identify budget deficits and follow corporate procedures in procuring the required resources to ensure the effective management of hazards and risks from HAVS.</li> </ul>
Lead Countryside and Coast Co-Ordinator  and  Facilities Co-Ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure all employees within their remit have adequate information, instruction and training to manage the hazards and risks from hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS).</li> <li>• To ensure all employees within their remit are competent, enabling them to follow policy and procedures to prevent their exposure and mitigate the risks from the use of tools that may cause symptoms of HAVS.</li> <li>• To undertake vibration risk assessments, identifying the hazards and risks associated with employees working with vibrating equipment and take measures to control these risks so far as is reasonably practicable.</li> <li>• To develop safe systems of work to mitigate the risks from HAVS where the Exposure Action Value (EAV) is reached.</li> <li>• To review the hand arm vibration risk assessment annually, ensuring they up to date, reflecting all the equipment used and work activities undertaken by employees which may expose them to HAVS.</li> <li>• To provide adequate supervision ensuring that employees are following the policy and procedures to manage the hazards and risks from HAVS. To take appropriate action if an employee is not following policy and procedures and if there are repeated infringements to report these to the Operational Manager.</li> <li>• To identify budgets, in particularly budget deficits, in relation to the management of the hazards and risks from HAVS and to report these to their Operational Manager.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 2

Designation	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure recommendations following annual occupational health surveillance are actioned to reduce the hazards and risks of hand arm vibration.</li> <li>• To arrange for appropriate training and to keep records (for 40 years).</li> <li>• To follow management procedures set out in sections 4 and 6 of this Policy.</li> </ul>
Parks and Countryside Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To supervise the day-to-day management of employees within their Team to ensure the hazards and risks from hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) are controlled and mitigated.</li> <li>• To schedule work activities to limit employee exposure to equipment that may cause HAVS.</li> <li>• To ensure employees are familiar with and follow the safe systems of work developed to mitigate the risks of HAVS.</li> <li>• To provide adequate information and instruction on equipment and its use to mitigate the risk of HAVS.</li> <li>• To monitor employees to ensure they are following HAVS policy and procedures, <b>including a weekly check to ensure employees are recording their daily vibration exposure in the relevant log.</b></li> <li>• To ensure employees attend occupational health screening checks.</li> <li>• To raise concerns around the management of HAVS with their managers.</li> </ul>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To procure an appropriate occupational provider with the relevant competencies to undertake occupational health surveillance in relation to hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS).</li> <li>• To co-ordinate the annual occupational health surveillance of all employees exposed to HAVS and to keep suitable records of this (to be kept for 40 years).</li> <li>• To ensure any occupational health recommendations are actioned, including any follow up checks, and to keep suitable records of this.</li> <li>• To inform relevant managers of recommendations which may highlight omissions in the management of HAVS.</li> <li>• To consult trade union safety representatives or employee representatives on the employers' proposals to control risk and to provide health surveillance for HAVS.</li> <li>• To undertake pre-employment and exit checks in line with section 7 of this Policy.</li> <li>• To inform the health and safety advisor of any cases of occupational disease, including HAVS.</li> </ul>

Designation	Responsibilities
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To co-operate their managers / supervisors on all matters relating to the management of hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS), including occupational health screening.</li> <li>• To take reasonable care of their own health and to ensure that their activities do NOT put others at risk.</li> <li>• To make proper use of equipment provided including personal protective equipment (PPE).</li> <li>• NOT to interfere with anything that safeguards their health and safety or the health and safety of others.</li> <li>• <b>To accurately complete vibration logs daily when using equipment that may cause HAVS and to job share if approaching the exposure action value (EAV) – see section 4 of this Policy for more information.</b></li> <li>• To report any concerns regarding the management of HAVS to their line manager or another appropriate person, including the inability to job share if approaching the EAV.</li> <li>• To report to their line manager or another appropriate person if they believe they may be suffering any symptoms of HAVS.</li> <li>• To follow the guidance in section 5 of this Policy.</li> </ul>
Health and Safety Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To report any cases of disease to the HSE in line with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.</li> </ul>

## Arrangements for Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

### 1. Introduction

Hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) is vibration transmitted from work processes into workers' hands and arms. Whilst occasional exposure is unlikely to cause ill health, regular and frequent exposure can lead to permanent health effects.

Hand-arm vibration can result in damaged nerves, blood vessels and joints of the hand, wrist and arm, as well as a reduced blood supply, leading to a range of conditions collectively known as hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS).

The effects of HAVS on employees can include: -

- reduced flexibility and strength of grip
- inability to do fine work
- inability to work with hand held equipment
- pain, distress and sleep disturbance
- difficulty in working outdoors during inclement weather, as the symptoms may be aggravated by cold and / or damp conditions

## APPENDIX 2

As well as severely limiting the jobs an affected employee can do, HAVS can also impact many family and social activities.

### 2. Symptoms of HAVS

Early symptoms include: -

- tingling and numbness (pins and needles) in the fingers
- fingertips going white (blanching) and becoming red and painful on recovery (particularly in the cold and wet)
- not being able to feel things properly
- loss of strength in the hands

Symptoms can develop after a few months or many years of exposure to vibrating equipment. Continued exposure is likely to lead to a worsening of the condition and permanent damage. It can cause conditions such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Raynaud's Disease (also known as white finger).

### 3. What causes HAVS

Jobs requiring regular and frequent work with vibrating equipment are most likely to result in an employee suffering from HAVS. Examples of such equipment are: -

- chainsaws / kerb saws / hand-held or hand-fed circular saws
- power hammers / hammer drills
- pedestal grinders / hand-held grinders, polishers and sanders
- breakers
- disc cutters / brush cutters
- powered lawn mowers
- trimmers / brush cutters
- electrical screw drivers

The risk of developing HAVS depends on a number of factors, such as: -

- the amount of vibration produced by the tool
- how often the tool is used
- how long the tool is used for on each occasion
- the way the tool is used
- working conditions, including posture and weather conditions
- the health of the individual.

### 4. Management Responsibilities

#### 4.1 Managers will: -

- i. assess the vibration risk to their employees;
- ii. ensure that the hazard and risk from the exposure of their employees to vibration is either eliminated at source or, where this is not reasonably practicable, reduced to as low a level as is reasonably practicable;
- iii. decide if employees are likely to be exposed above the daily exposure action value (HAVS) and, if they are: -

## APPENDIX 2

- introduce a programme of organisational and technical measures to eliminate risk, or reduce exposure to as low a level as is reasonably practicable;
- decide if employees are likely to be exposed above the daily exposure limit value (ELV) and, if they are, take immediate action to reduce their exposure to below the limit value and reduce so far as reasonably practicable thereafter;
- provide information, instruction and training to employees on health risks and the actions the employers are taking to control those risks – see section 6 of this Policy for more detail;
- provide health surveillance to those employees who continue to be regularly exposed above the action value or, due to individual circumstances, continue to be at risk;
- take action when there are adverse health surveillance results;
- keep a record of risk assessments and control actions;
- regularly review and update risk assessments;
- consult trade union safety representatives or employee representatives on the employers' proposals to control risk and to provide health surveillance.

4.2 The **exposure action value (EAV)** is a daily amount of vibration exposure above which the Council is required to take specific action to control exposure. The greater the exposure level, the greater the risk and the more action the Council will need to take to reduce the risk. For hand-arm vibration the EAV is a daily exposure of 2.5 m/s<sup>2</sup> A(8) (equivalent to 100 points using the HSE calculator).

4.3 The **exposure limit value (ELV)** is the maximum amount of vibration an employee may be exposed to on any single day. For hand-arm vibration, the ELV is a daily exposure of 5 m/s<sup>2</sup> A(8) (equivalent to 400 points using the HSE calculator). It represents an unacceptably high risk above which employees can only be exposed under exceptional emergency conditions for which stringent conditions apply.

4.4 **Risk Assessment:** managers must undertake vibration risk assessments, identifying the hazards and risks associated of employees working with vibrating equipment and take measures to control these risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

Managers must implement control measures whenever employees are likely to be exposed to vibration levels above the EAV. Where an individual employee is at a higher level of risk, the manager must develop controls specifically for them.

### 4.5 Management

#### Alternative ways of working: -

- to consider alternative work methods that eliminate or reduce exposure to vibration (trade associations, journals and equipment suppliers may be able to help identify good practice);
- mechanise or automate the work;
- plan work to avoid exposure to vibration for long, continuous periods;
- use staff rotas to limit exposure times, especially where continual or frequent use;
- ensure regular breaks for employees using vibrating equipment.

### **Equipment Procurement: -**

- ensure that equipment selected or allocated for tasks is suitable and can do the work efficiently (equipment that is unsuitable, too small or not powerful enough is likely to take much longer to complete the task and expose employees to vibration for longer than is necessary);
- select the lowest vibration tool that is suitable and can do the work efficiently (NB an unsuitable tool could have a lower vibration rating but result in employees having greater vibration exposure due to tasks taking longer to complete);
- check with supplier that the equipment is suitable and effective for the work activity, compare vibration emission information for different brands/models; ask for vibration information on the way you plan to use the equipment and information on any training requirements for safe operation; check with a range of suppliers;
- get employees to try the different models and brands of equipment and take account of their opinions before deciding which to buy;
- find out about the equipment's vibration-reduction features and how to use and maintain the equipment to make these features effective;
- identify and prohibit work practices which can increase the equipment's vibration magnitude;
- limit the use of high-vibration tools whenever possible.

### **Workstation design: -**

- improve the design of workstations to minimise loads on employees' hands, wrists and arms caused by poor posture;
- use devices such as jigs and suspension systems to reduce the need to grip heavy tools tightly.

### **Maintenance: -**

- introduce appropriate maintenance programmes for equipment (including vibration reduction features) to prevent avoidable increases in vibration (following the manufacturer's recommendations where appropriate);
- do not use damaged equipment and replace consumable items such as grinding wheels, so that equipment is efficient and keeps employee exposure as short as possible;
- equipment tagged with a points system where there is a risk from HAVS (tags to be replaced where missing).

### **Work schedule: -**

- plan work to avoid individuals being exposed to vibration for long, continuous periods – several shorter periods are preferable;
- where tools require continual or frequent use, introduce employee rotas to minimise exposure times – avoid employees being exposed for periods that are long enough to put them in the high-risk group;
- ensure that employee daily exposure logs are maintained.

### **Clothing: -**

- provide employees with protective clothing when necessary to keep them warm and dry (this will encourage good blood circulation, which should help protect them from developing HAVS); gloves can be used to keep hands warm, but, should not be relied upon to provide protection from vibration and should not interfere with the safe use of equipment.

**Monitor: -**

- regularly check that the programme of controls you have introduced is being carried out (including on the job monitoring);
- talk regularly to supervisors, employees and trade union safety representatives or employee representatives about whether there are any vibration problems with any equipment or the way it is being used;
- check the results of health surveillance and discuss with the appropriate member of the Occupational Health whether the controls appear to be effective or if they need to be changed.

**5. What employees can do**

Employees working with hand-held power tools or powered hand-guided / hand-fed equipment can greatly reduce the risk of developing HAVS. Some effective ways they can do this are as follows: -

- inform their manager about any equipment that produces high levels of vibration so that the risks can be properly addressed;
- maintain blood flow in the fingers while working by: -
  - keeping warm at work, especially their hands (by wearing warm gloves and extra clothes if they work in the cold);
  - exercising hands and fingers to improve circulation;
- follow safe systems of work;
- use the right equipment for the job (using the wrong equipment can lead to more vibration or cause them to grip the tools more tightly) in accordance with instructions;
- don't use any greater physical force than necessary to grip or drive / direct equipment;
- avoid lengthy periods of using equipment without a break - short bursts are better;
- keep tools in good working order – if necessary, asking managers to get equipment repaired;
- share high risk tasks with other employees to reduce exposure time;
- take an active part in any health and safety courses they are required to attend;
- **do not ignore symptoms** (if an employee thinks vibration is affecting their fingers, hands, wrists or arms, stop work and report the matter to their manager immediately (the manager can arrange for a referral to Occupational Health via HR);
- immediately report relevant medical factors such as diagnosis of diabetes;
- **accurately record their daily vibration exposure in the relevant log.**

**6. Information, instruction and training for employees**

**6.1 Managers must** ensure that employees are provided with information on: -

- the health effects of hand-arm vibration
- sources of hand-arm vibration
- whether they are at risk and, if so, an estimation of the risk they may be exposed to
- the risk factors (e.g. the levels of vibration, daily exposure duration, regularity of exposure over weeks, months and years)
- how to recognise symptoms of HAVS and other vibration related health conditions

## APPENDIX 2

- how to report symptoms (reporting symptoms early will allow managers to investigate the tools and equipment being used by the individual and their working patterns without delay)
- the need for health surveillance (how it helps them remain fit for work and how this will be provided)
- the need to immediately report significant medical factors
- ways to minimise risk, including:
  - good working practices to reduce vibration exposure;
  - correct selection, use of and maintenance of equipment;
  - reporting defects and problems with equipment so that replacements can be obtained when necessary;
  - correct techniques for equipment use, how to reduce grip force, etc.;
  - specific practices to avoid;
  - maintenance of good blood circulation at work by keeping warm.

### 7. Health surveillance

7.1 Health surveillance to be provided to all employees who, despite the preventative actions that have been implemented to control the risk, are likely to be regularly exposed above the exposure action value of  $2.5 \text{ m/s}^2 \text{ A}(8)$ , or who are considered to be at risk for any other reason. Surveillance will take place annually or more frequently if this is recommended by occupational health.

7.2 The purpose of health surveillance is to: -

- identify anyone exposed or about to be exposed to hand-arm vibration who may be at higher risk, e.g. people with blood circulatory diseases;
- identify any vibration-related symptom at an early stage in employees regularly exposed to hand-arm vibration;
- help prevent disease progression and eventual disability;
- help people stay in work;
- check the effectiveness of vibration control measures.

7.3 Medical records will be maintained by HR in line with data protection requirements.

7.4 Pre-placement and exit medical examination: an assessment will be undertaken by the Occupational Health Adviser (and, if necessary, the Occupational Health Physician) before they commence employment in any post involving the use of vibrating equipment. Similarly, any employee leaving a post involving the use of vibrating equipment will be screened (unless they have received screening within the previous 6 months) to provide an adequate pre-exit health status record.

**Key information source for this topic: -**

[Hand arm vibration at work](#)

[Hand arm vibration - Exposure Calculator](#)

[Hand arm vibration - Worried about your hands?](#)

[Hand arm vibration - Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005](#)

[INDG 175 - Hand Arm Vibration at Work](#)