

Introduction:

Employees who frequently and regularly use vibrating equipment could suffer permanent damage to nerves, blood vessels and joints of the hand, wrist and arm. Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) caused by exposure to vibration at work is preventable, but once the damage is done it is permanent.

FP McCann 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.

Scope:

This policy is intended to apply to all FP McCann employees, agency workers & long-term subcontractors irrespective of their length of service, status or number of hours worked. This policy and procedure does not form part of the contract of employment and will be amended from time to time.

Aims:

To provide a working environment that promotes and supports the health and wellbeing of all employees.

What is Hand-Arm Vibration?

Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) is vibration transmitted from work processes into workers hands and arms. It can be caused by operating hand-held power tools, or by holding materials being processed by machines. Etc. Regular and frequent exposure to HAV can lead to permanent ill health effects including a combination of neurological, (nerves) vascular (circulation) and musculoskeletal symptoms, (collectively referred to as hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS)).

Occasional exposure is unlikely to cause ill health.

What are the 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

Continued exposure is likely to lead to a worsening of the condition and permanent damage.

Regulations that apply:

- The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 (COVRW, 2005)
- The general provisions of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998

Responsibilities:

Employer

The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations require employers to:

- Assess the vibration risk to their employees
- Ensure that 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
- Identify if employees are likely to be exposed above the daily exposure action value (EAV) and if they are:
 - Introduce a programme of organisational and technical measures to eliminate risk or reduce exposure to as low a level as is reasonably practicable
 - Provide health surveillance to those employees who continue to be at risk
- Identify if employees are likely to be exposed above the daily exposure limit value (ELV) and if they are, take action to reduce their exposure to below the limit value and reduce so far as reasonably practicable thereafter
- Provide information and training to employees on health risks and the actions the employers are taking to control risks
- Keep a record of the employer's risk assessments and control actions
- Keep health records of employees who are under health surveillance
- Regularly review and update risk assessments

Risk Assessment:

In accordance with the general provisions of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999 and the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 (COVRW, 2005), managers must ensure that a risk assessment is carried out:

- in order to assess the risks caused by working with vibrating equipment and
- to reduce the risk as far as is reasonably practicable while considering the following controls;

Surveillance:

The exposure action value (EAV) is a daily amount of vibration exposure above which employers are required to take specific action to control exposure. The greater the exposure level, the greater the risk and the more action employers will need to take to reduce the risk. The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations (COVWR, 2005) has established the necessity for Health Surveillance at exposure action value (EAV) over an average eight hour working day, (A8) of 2.5 m/s² using triaxle measurements or where deemed necessary by risk assessment. The introduction of the lower EAV together with a reduction in the exposure limit value (ELV) of 5.0 m/s² means that many more workers will require health surveillance.

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 5.0 m/s² A(8) (equivalent to 400 points using the HSE calculator).

To support the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 the HSE have produced a calculator to assist in calculating exposures for hand-arm vibration. A guidance leaflet is also provided. <http://www.hse.gov.uk>.

Advice to Employee:

Employees are able to greatly reduce the risk of developing HAVS. They should:

- Notify their Manager about equipment that produces high levels of vibration so that the risks can be properly assessed
- Keep warm at work, especially their hands by wearing gloves and exercise hands and fingers to maintain blood flow and improve circulation
- Consider giving up smoking to improve circulation
- Ensure they use the correct equipment for the job
- Not use any greater physical force than necessary to grip/drive/direct equipment
- Avoid lengthy periods of using equipment without a break
- Maintain tools so they are in good working order
- Share high risk tasks with work colleagues where reasonably practicable
- Follow the health & safety advice in relation to HAVS
- Seek advice at the earliest opportunity if they start experiencing symptoms
- Report any medical factors such as diagnosis of diabetes immediately
- Record vibrating tool usage in the "trigger time" diaries accurately
- Carry out Health Survey on the Kiosk & record any issues with hands every 6 months
- Notify Manager/SHE Officer of any changes between health survey checks recorded on the kiosk
- Communicate regularly with Managers, Supervisors and SHE team and inform them about whether there are any problems with any equipment or the way it is being used

Health Monitoring & Surveillance:

FP McCann carries out regular Health Surveillance by an independent Occupational Health Provider. The purpose is to:

- Identify employees exposed to or about to be exposed to hard-arm vibration who may be at particular risk
- Identify any vibration-related symptom at an early stage
- Help prevent disease progression
- Check the effectiveness of vibration control measures

The tiered approach to health surveillance for HAVS includes the following elements:

Pre-Employment – A Pre-employment Questionnaire completed by all employees

- Exposure noted. If symptoms are declared, it is escalated to the SHE Manager who will issue a Tier 2 Questionnaire.

Tier 1 - An Employee Health Survey completed every 6 months via the kiosk

- If symptoms are declared, SHE Officer completes a FOCH96 and SHE Manager reviews and the necessary action approved.

Tier 2 - A Questionnaire issued by Occupational Health for employees exposed to vibration to check if they need referral to level 3

- Occupational Health Nurse reviews this

Tier 3 – A HAVS Nurse led clinical assessment – carried out by Occupational Health Provider

Tier 4 - Assessment by Occupational Health Physician

- Recommendations assessed and implemented in accordance with advice.

Medical records will be maintained on the employee's personnel file.

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Monitoring & Control:

Operations involving vibrating tools will be assessed and appropriate action taken to control vibration exposure. The method of HAVS monitoring will utilise information from the HSE website with regards to obtaining tool data (vibration emission) and review manufacturer's data provided by tool manufacturers to assist with identifying daily HAVs exposure (msq2) from activities involving hand tools.

Periodic assessments of FP McCann sites will be carried out to:

- Identify activities / work processes where there is exposure to HAV.
- Rank activities from highest to medium to lowest risk
- Collect information about the equipment from handbooks/manuals/HSE data ie – make, model, power, vibration risks, vibration information
- Note as accurately as possible how long the employee's hands are actually in contact with the equipment while it is vibrating – this is known as “trigger time”. (This could in some cases only be a few minutes during several hours of work with the equipment)
- Speak to employees about any potential problems they may have when using the equipment eg. It's weight, awkward postures needed to use the tool etc
- Record the relevant information

In order to monitor trigger times, employees may be provided with a “trigger time” diary (FOCH 013 HAV Monitoring) to complete during the use of the tools by recording the time during each operation of the tool. This should be completed over a 2 week period.

Once complete, the trigger time diary will be given to the SHE officer who will;

- review the data provided
- calculate daily usage of tools
- provide instruction on daily usage limits of tools to Managers / Employees
- record the trigger diary, findings and instructions in the appropriate electronic file

The monitoring of vibration exposure will also form part of the internal safety audits carried out. Findings that fall outside the acceptable standards, will be reported to Managers with the recommendations and appropriate actions highlighted. Timescales for improvements will be set.

In addition, an external provider will be engaged to carry out vibration monitoring when required for tools and machinery.

External audit reports will be reviewed by the SHE Managers and the recommendations and appropriate actions highlighted and notified to the relevant Manager. Timescales for improvements will be set.

Enforcement:

Where an employee ignores the guidance on HAV, fails to or refuses to complete the “trigger diary”, they will be given a “safety conversation” to include:

- Reason for conversation
- Reminder of the rules on HAVS
- Reminder of the Employee responsibilities in relation to HAVS
- Consequences for failing to follow the company rules on Health & Safety ie possible disciplinary action

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This will be recorded on their personnel file.

Information & Training:


Raising awareness about HAVS will be carried out through Toolbox Talks.

Training in correct operating procedures can significantly reduce the risk of injury and will be provided for employees involved in all operations identified as having a significant risk.

Review:

The Health & Safety department will review this policy regularly.

Signed: _____


Hugh McCann
Managing Director

Reviewed:

Last Reviewed:

Next Review:

12 January 2026

11 January 2025

January 2027