

HSE inspections target woodworking businesses to tackle occupational lung disease

are endangering workers' lives by failing to implement the measures required to prevent or control exposure to wood dust says the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Supported by HSE's Dust Kills campaign, which provides free advice to businesses and workers on the control measures required to prevent exposure to dust, HSE inspectors across Great Britain will be visiting businesses within woodworking industries such as sawmilling, manufacture of composite boards, and carpentry, focusing on the dangers of respiratory risks from wood dust.

Woodworking industries have the potential for high incidence rates of occupational ill-health caused by worker exposure to inadequately controlled wood dust in the workplace, such as sino-nasal cancer, occupational asthma and dermatitis.

Throughout 2023/24, inspectors will be looking for evidence that employers have considered the control measures required to reduce workers exposure to wood dust, that workers understand the risks of exposure to wood dust, and effective control measures have been put in place to protect workers from harm. Inspectors will take enforcement action when necessary to make sure workers are protected.

In 2022/23, HSE carried out more than 1,000 woodworking inspections and found 78% of businesses were not compliant in protecting workers from respiratory sensitisers (*primarily dust from hardwoods, softwoods and composite materials such as MDF*). This resulted in 402 enforcement actions taken by HSE, highlighting particular areas of concern around provision and use of suitable Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) and Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV), as well as the administration of health surveillance.

HSE's head of manufacturing David Butter said: "Around 12,000 workers died last year from lung diseases linked to past exposure from work, and there are an estimated 19,000 new cases of breathing and lung problems each year, where individuals regarded their condition as being caused or made worse by work.

"Wood dust can cause serious health problems. It can cause [asthma](#), which carpenters and joiners are four times more likely to get compared with other UK workers, as well as sino-nasal cancer. Our campaign aims to help businesses whose workers cut and shape wood to take action now to protect their workers' respiratory health."

HSE inspections in 2022/23 identified four main areas of concern, where businesses failed to adequately implement the control measures required to

protect workers. These were housekeeping (including dry sweeping of wood dust), Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) maintenance and thorough examination, selection of and face fit testing for Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE), and health surveillance for exposure to wood dust.

David added: “Through visiting woodworking businesses, our inspectors are able to speak to a range of employers and look at the measures they have in place to comply with the guidance and protect workers from respiratory diseases such as occupational asthma and sino-nasal cancer.

“Our inspection initiative aims to ensure employers and workers are aware of the risks associated with the activities they do. They must recognise these dangers and manage these risks through reducing exposure. Employers need to do the right thing, for example, through completing a risk assessment, ensuring workers are trained, reducing exposure using LEV and using suitable RPE to protect workers, where required.”

For more information visit the [Dust Kills: Wood Dust campaign page](#).

Notes to editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
3. The inspection programme will be supported by HSE’s ‘Work Right Dust Kills’ campaign, aimed to influence employer behaviour by providing guidance to woodworking industries.
4. Further information about HSE occupational lung disease statistics can be found: [Occupational Lung Disease statistics in Great Britain, 2022 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

[Drones used to spray pesticides in Great Britain](#)

Drones are being used to spray pesticides for the first time in Great Britain in a trial of new technology.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved the trial that allows plants and weeds growing around railway infrastructure to be treated by pesticides applied by drones.

The technology was discussed at an international conference organised by HSE. The regulator leads a global partnership looking at how drones could be used to apply pesticides in the future.

The railway trial allows chemical herbicides to be sprayed on railway bridges, tunnel portals and viaducts. The technology could potentially be used in other industries.



A demonstration of the drone technology took place on May 25

Professor Andrew Curran, HSE's chief scientific adviser, said: "Although we need to carefully consider both the environmental implications and potential consequences for human health, the emerging evidence suggests using drones to spray pesticides could have a positive impact on safety and the environment. If applied in the right way drones could spray more safely and more economically. This could have big implications for other industries especially agriculture."

HSE plays a prominent role in an initiative designed to help regulators around the world assess the risks associated with applying pesticides by drone.

Applying Pesticides Using Drones took place in York between 23 and 24 May and was sponsored by the OECD Co-operative Research Programme: Sustainable Agricultural and Food Systems.



Professor Andrew Curran, HSE's chief scientific adviser and Dr Richard Daniels, CRD Director spoke on the opening day of a two-day conference

Attendees heard from internationally recognised regulators, researchers and industry experts from North America, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

“We believe we have a key role in driving international developments which can help improve safety and protect people, places and the environment around the globe,” said Professor Curran.

In the trial, drones developed by commercial firm Railscape Ltd have been used to control plants and weeds growing around railway infrastructure. This is normally done by workers manually, who often must work at height, overnight and on a tight time schedule when trains aren’t operating. It is hoped using drones will reduce the risk of injury to workers and make the application more efficient and effective.

Ed Lewis, operations and project manager at Railscape, said the drone had been designed to spray pesticides in areas that are difficult or hazardous to reach using conventional working at height methods.

“While it was designed to operate in the railway environment, there are wider opportunities for other applications in equally challenging environments,” he added.

“The Railscape solution is a UK first and we are currently the only company offering this service.”

About HSE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk

[Company fined as worker crushed by 700kg crate](#)

A glass distribution and installation company has been fined £200,000 after an employee broke two ribs and fractured his vertebra after being crushed by a crate.

The man, 29, was working for PSV Glass and Glazing Limited at the firm’s warehouse at Stakehill Industrial Estate in Middleton.

He had been moving a crate of replacement glass, weighing approximately

700kg, with the help of another colleague on 16 June 2021.

The pair placed the crate on the top of a set of skates and intended to push the load across the warehouse. While doing this however, the crate became unbalanced and fell, trapping the worker underneath.



The crate that was being moved by the two workers

He suffered two broken ribs, a punctured lung and a fractured vertebra. Six screws and a plate were inserted to fix the vertebra.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found PSV Glass and Glazing Limited's system of work used to move crates in the warehouse was hazardous. When a crate was balanced on the skates it became unstable, increasing the risk of the load tipping. In addition to an inadequate system of work to move the crates, the company also had no suitable risk assessment despite a previous similar incident. Had the warehouse been less congested, a more suitable method of moving the crates could have been used, such as a proprietary pallet handling truck.

HSE guidance can be found at: [HSE – Moving goods safely](#)

PSV Glass & Glazing Limited, of Hillbottom Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay £4,897.05 in costs at Manchester Magistrates' Court on 26 May 2023.

HSE inspector Sharon Butler said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks when moving and handling loads and that the correct equipment is identified and used."

Notes to Editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury

and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.

2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.

[Hampshire hygiene consultancy firm fined after admitting failures](#)

A Hampshire-based hygiene consultancy firm has been fined £2,000 after its failures put workers at risk of exposure to hazardous substances.

Envirochem Analytical Laboratories Limited provided an occupational hygiene consultancy service to customers across the South of England. The reports provided by Envirochem are used by their customers to make decisions regarding necessary controls to protect their workforce from risks to their health from substances including hazardous chemicals and dusts. However, they provided one customer with a deficient occupational hygiene exposure monitoring report.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the report to be inadequate and did not provide the information necessary regarding the extent of exposure to hazardous substances, including isocyanates from paint spraying, a potent respiratory sensitiser. The report used inappropriate occupational hygiene monitoring and analysis methods and consequently under-reported the actual exposures at the customers premises.

Portsmouth Magistrates Court heard the services the company provided included the provision of reports, following testing carried out by their consultants at customer premises.

Envirochem Analytical Laboratories Limited, of The Gardens, Broadcut, Fareham, Hampshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £2,000 and ordered to pay £6,583 in costs at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court on 23 May 2023.

HSE inspector Nicola Pinckney said: "This was a case of the company failing to provide the specialist services which its customer expected.

"Consultancies providing specialist services have a responsibility to ensure they are competent to undertake this type of work, undertake the work to the correct standards and provide accurate reports. They need to provide the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to their employees undertaking this work to enable them to provide this specialist service.

“I would urge those wanting to appoint occupational hygiene specialists to check with the relevant professional body (i.e. the British Occupational Hygiene Society) as to whether those offering consultancy services are competent to do so.”

Notes to editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.

[Samantha Peace appointed HSE Director of Energy Division](#)

The regulator that oversees significant parts of the energy industry has announced a new Director.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has appointed Samantha Peace to lead its Energy Division.

Current Director Chris Flint has chosen to retire. Chris will leave HSE in April next year. Before then, he will lead several projects for HSE and work with Samantha to ensure a smooth transfer.



Chris Flint (left) and Samantha Peace (right)

Samantha, who has worked at HSE for 28 years, has a background in regulation. She joined HSE in 1995 as a factory inspector before moving to senior leadership positions in HSE's Field Operations Division.

Alongside her role with HSE, Samantha is a member of the executive committee of the International Association of Labour Inspection (IALI) where she works with regulators across the world.

Samantha said: "It is a great privilege to be named as HSE's Director of Energy Division. It is well-regarded for its work in areas including regulating offshore energy and has been expertly led by Chris for the last few years. I look forward to beginning my new position and will continue to build on the great work Chris has done during his time as Director."

Chris, who was appointed as Director in 2017, said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Director of Energy Division at HSE and am pleased that someone as experienced and accomplished as Samantha is taking over. There have been some wonderful projects in the offshore and energy field that I am very grateful to have worked on and now look forward to tackling new challenges in the Director of Regulation office."

Jane Lassey, Acting Director of Regulation at HSE, said: "Alongside everyone at HSE, I congratulate Samantha on her new position. Samantha has excelled in every position she has held with HSE and I am certain she will continue to do the same as Director of our Energy Division.

"I also wish Chris all the best in his new role before retiring next year. Chris oversaw numerous challenges and key projects whilst leading our Energy Division and proved himself as an excellent Director as well as demonstrating his commitment to HSE."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>