

INCIDENT TYPE:

CONTROL OF VIBRATION AT WORK REGULATIONS 2005
Came into force on the 6th July 2005

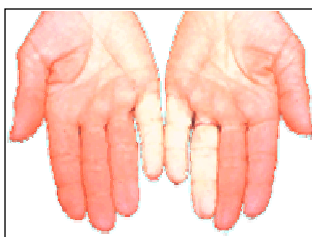
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Summary

HAVS (hand arm vibration syndrome) is a major cause of occupational ill-health, with around 3,000 new claims made each year in relation to vibration white finger alone, often leading to substantial compensation pay-outs.

The new regulations require employers to take action to prevent employees from developing diseases caused by exposure to vibration at work from equipment, vehicles and machines. Hand-arm vibration affects people using hand-held or hand-guided power tools and those workers holding materials that vibrate when fed into machines.

Long-term exposure to high levels of hand-arm vibration can lead to a range of disabling conditions including vibration white finger, loss of feeling in the fingers and painful joints in the hands, wrists and arms.



One railway employee recently received over £200,000 compensation in relation to vibration white finger.

Facts and Figures

- The number of annual new cases of Vibration White Finger (VWF) assessed for disablement benefit under the Industrial Injuries Scheme (IIS) was 1,775 in 2002/03 (1,765 males and 10 females) down from 2425 (2,415 males and 10 females) in 2001/02, and lower than in the preceding seven years.
- An estimated provisional total of 423 cases of hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) were seen by occupational physicians and rheumatologists in the OPRA/MOSS reporting schemes in 2003, compared with 1,181 cases in the previous year 2002.
- The Medical Research Council (MRC) survey in 1997-98 gave a prevalence estimate of 288,000 sufferers from vibration white finger (VWF) in Great Britain (255,000 males and 33,000 females respectively).
- The industry group with by far the highest average rate of new assessments of disability in 2000-2003 was extraction energy and water supply, due to the relatively large number of claims made by current or former coal miners.

What needs to be done

- Implement design measures to eliminate or reduce the vibration risk to the construction workers.
- Seek alternative methods that do not expose operatives to Vibration.
- Assess all vibration equipment, to ensure that regulated vibration levels are not being exceeded.
- Where high vibration levels cannot be avoided, ensure that safety precautions (i.e. job rotation, Traffic Light system etc) are being practised.
- Where risk assessments indicate the need or upon reaching the Action Level ensure that a health surveillance program is initiated.
- The new regulation applies to both Hand-Arm Vibration *and* Whole-Body Vibration.

Restrictions found in the Control of Vibration at work Regulations 2005

The Vibration Regulations 2005 that were introduced on Wednesday the 6th of July 2005, imposes restrictions on the level of Vibration that a worker can be exposed to at any time and over an eight hour period.

Prior to these regulations there was only guidance on vibration, which was provided by the HSE in 1994.

The table below shows the changes that the new regulations bring in comparison with the guidance that was previously provided.

Hand Arm Vibration

	1994 Guidance	2005 Guidance
Action Level	2.8 m/s ²	2.5 m/s ²
Limit Value	N/A	5 m/s ²

Whole body Vibration

	1994 Guidance	2005 Guidance
Action Level	N/A	0.5 m/s ²
Limit Value	N/A	1.15 m/s ²

Regulation and Guidance

Control of Vibration at work regulations 2005

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20051093.htm>

Guidance on the Control of Vibration Regulations

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/information.htm>