

SECTION 12 - HEALTH HAZARDS

NO. 43 VIBRATION

Vibration White Finger (V.W.F.) can result from the transmission of vibration from a vibrating implement (i.e. road-breakers, chain-saws, riveting guns, etc.) to the hands, occurring as a result of several years of regular exposure.

Primarily, it results in damage to the blood vessels and nerves of the hand resulting in skin blanching (white finger) on exposure to cold, together with pain, pins and needles, numbness and loss of manual dexterity. If you are affected you will suffer symptoms on exposure to cold conditions with the time taken for recovery increasing as the condition develops. The condition may become permanent if early symptoms are not identified and action taken. It is important to recognise that these symptoms do not necessarily occur during or immediately after exposure to vibration but usually occur early in the morning when the weather is cold. Therefore, cold is the primary trigger for the symptoms.

If you smoke you are at increased risk since smoking reduces the supply of oxygenated blood to your hands and fingers.

The main way to prevent V.W.F. is to reduce levels of vibration by careful selection of equipment, the introduction of damping techniques on existing equipment if practicable, the use of alternative work procedures if possible, and to minimise the time working with vibrating machinery by job rotation.

You should also follow these simple precautions:-

- Wear adequate clothing to keep dry and maintain hand and body temperature at an acceptable level, wear suitable gloves to keep your hands warm. Anti vibration gloves are available which can reduce exposure.
- Let the machine do the work and grip the handle as lightly as possible, providing that this is consistent with safe working practice.
- Do not use blunt tools. Keep steels sharp and use the appropriate tool for the job.
- If you smoke and use vibratory equipment you are at increased risk of vibration related disease, since nicotine reduces the blood supply to the hands and fingers.
- Should attacks of white or blue finger or long periods of tingling and/or numbness occur, report this to your Supervisor.
- Inform your Supervisor if abnormal vibration occurs when using your machine.