

HSE inspections target woodworking businesses to tackle occupational lung disease

3 years ago



Ventilation, protective equipment and appropriate guarding are some of the measures businesses should consider as Britain's workplace regulator is carrying out inspections to protect the respiratory health of workers.

From April, health and safety inspectors across Great Britain will be visiting business within woodworking industries such as sawmilling, manufacture of composite boards, and carpentry, as well as other industries where wood dust exposure can occur.

Woodworking industries have the potential for high incidence rates of occupational asthma and work-aggravated asthma caused by worker exposure to inadequately controlled wood dust in the workplace.

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.

HSE's head of manufacturing David Butter said: "Around 12,000 workers died last year from lung diseases linked to past exposure from work, with thousands more cases of ill-health and working days lost. 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 nasal cancer. Our campaign aims to help businesses whose workers cut and shape wood to take action now to protect their workers'

respiratory health.

“Through visiting wood working businesses, our inspectors are able to speak to a range of dutyholders 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 nasal cancer.

“Businesses can act now to ensure they are complying with the law by ensuring the control of wood dust at source by fitting and using extraction on machines. Ensuring they fit and use guards on machines to protect fingers and hands and ensure those that use the machine to understand the risks and how to control them. Checking that guards are well adjusted will minimise danger and ensure that dust capture remains effective.

“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. Dutyholders need to do the right thing, for example, through completing a risk assessment, ensuring workers are trained, appropriate guarding is fitted and adjusted correctly, and reducing exposure using local exhaust ventilation (LEV) and using suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE) to protect workers, where required.”

For the latest advice and guidance visit www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/; for more information on the programme of inspections follow the campaign on Twitter at @H_S_E or on Facebook @hsegovuk. You can also join the conversation at #WorkRight and sign up for HSE’s e-bulletin [here](#).

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