

CORPORATE SAFETY COMMITTEE – 23RD OCTOBER 2003

SUBJECT: HAND/ARM VIBRATION SYNDROME

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members, Management and Trade Union Safety Representatives of recommended measures to reduce the incidence of Hand/Arm Vibration Syndrome amongst the workforce.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Hand/Arm Vibration Syndrome is a condition, which can affect anyone who is regularly exposed to high levels of vibration. It is most common with hand held power tools such as pneumatic drills, chainsaws, power hammers etc. It can damage blood vessels, nerves, bones and muscles causing reduced blood flow, loss of feeling, flexibility and strength of grip and considerable pain.
- 2.2 The Council, in line with other large employers of manual staff, is beginning to receive claims from members of staff who use hand held power tools.
- 2.3 There is a general requirement under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations, 1999 to undertake an assessment of the risks from vibrating tools and to provide health surveillance for occupational groups at risk. Having assessed the risk employers must manage it effectively.
- 2.4 In about two years time, when the Physical Agents Directive is expected to come into force, there will be more specific requirements to minimise the risks associated with the use of vibratory tools, with which the Council will have to comply.
- 2.5 In order to do this, it will be necessary to:
- (i) Ensure that the vibration rating for all new tools and equipment is as low as possible;
 - (ii) Screen existing vibratory tools and equipment so that the amount of vibration generated is known;
 - (iii) Arrange health screening for all existing staff who are exposed to vibration;
 - (iv) Ensure that pre-employment health checks for new employees who are likely to be exposed to vibration, or who have previously been exposed, includes the appropriate tests; and
 - (v) Set up appropriate health surveillance for employees exhibiting symptoms
- 2.6 Planning is being undertaken to ensure that the Authority is in a position to fulfil its legal obligations.

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