

Toolbox Talk: Wood Dust

Health risks

Wood dust is a substance that is hazardous to health as it can cause serious non-reversible health problems, including skin disorders, obstruction and inflammation to the nose, asthma and also a rare type of nasal cancer.

The biggest risk to our health is from the fine dust, as you can breathe this deep into your lungs where it will do the most damage. Fine dust will also spread further from the cutting process, so it is important that we clean equipment after use, including cleaning ledges and other work area surfaces regularly to prevent dust accumulating.

Wood dust is also flammable and, in certain situations, can cause fires and / or explosions. Every year, premises are severely damaged or destroyed by wood dust fires that usually start in dust extraction equipment. Wood dust explosions in buildings are rare, except in the chipboard industry.

Controlling Wood Dust

It is important that we minimise, and control dust produced. It is essential that we ensure Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) extraction systems are working properly and are set up correctly to ensure that the dust is removed from point of origin.

Do not use brushes and brooms to sweep up wood dust, this disturbs the dust and makes it air born where you are at risk of breathing the dust in. Please ensure where possible that the designated vacuums are used which are fitted with special filters to minimise airborne dust.

Do not use airlines to blow dust off yourselves / off your overalls as this makes the dust airborne and puts yourselves at risk of breathing in the airborne dust.

Ensure that where it is instructed / mandatory you wear designated Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) face masks. Ensure that they are fitted correctly and, when not in use, are stored safely in a sealed bag or container to prevent them from being contaminated with dust.

It is essential that we all practice good standards of housekeeping and hygiene arrangements i.e. wash your hands before breaks or smoking, etc.

If you are unsure about safety arrangements, feel that equipment / LEV systems are not working sufficiently / damaged, or have any concerns / issues about anything, raise it to your line manager / supervisor.



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