



OCCUPATIONAL VIBRATION

Manufacturers and Suppliers Information

Designers, manufacturers, importers and suppliers have responsibilities under section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work Act to supply machines and equipment which, so far as reasonably practicable, are safe and without risks to health, and to supply information about safe use.

The Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 specifically requires machine suppliers to provide safety information relating to vibration. **Suppliers must provide information on vibration levels if hand-held or hand-guided machinery is likely to subject employees to vibration (a_{hw}) exceeding $2.5m/s^2$** (i.e. the vibration magnitude when the tool is operating, not the A(8) vibration 'dose' over the whole working day).

This means that **any equipment that has been purchased since 1st January 1993 must be supplied with technical information relating to the vibration levels if they exceed $2.5m/s^2$. Manufacturers must also advise to what standard the machine has been tested to.** This standard must be a European Standard in order to comply with the CE certification requirements*.

Further, manufacturers must indicate in writing if their equipment falls below this level. Although there is no direct legal obligation, many reputable manufacturers will provide full information on vibration levels even when the levels are well below the $2.5m/s^2$ threshold. *(They will always know the exact levels of their machine as they must have completed a test to be able to say that it is less than $2.5m/s^2$.)*

This technical information is usually held within the operator or maintenance manuals for the equipment. If it is not contained within these documents then the manufacturer/ importer can be contacted directly quoting machine type, model no, date of purchase.

Users must however be careful in using the manufacturer's figures alone to estimate the potential risk. This is mainly due to the diversity of standards available that the manufacturer can choose from to declare their levels. For example, although it may seem ridiculous, tests can sometimes legitimately be conducted with a machine suspended in mid air running at slow speed, conducting no "work". While unlikely to be representative of "actual usage" these levels could then be declared and considered perfectly legal.

It is up to purchaser or user of the equipment to ascertain if such measurements (and the standard used) are representative of the work they are conducting as well as estimating the time they will use the equipment for to ensure that a "suitable and sufficient" risk assessment is conducted to comply with **their** requirements detailed within the Health & Safety at work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. With this in mind, preference should always be given to "on the job" risk assessments, where possible, conducting the actual work required.

However from the manufactures information and the chart available from HSE Solutions, employers and users can **roughly estimate** the duration for which a person can use an item of equipment for before they would reach any of the action levels. **If the time of use for each tool (given the manufacturers vibration level) is exceeded for either "action level" then "suitable and sufficient" risk assessments must be considered.**

For details of the specific standards to which machinery should be tested, or for any other information relation to occupational exposure to vibration contact HSE Solutions on 0141 332 3199 or www.hse-solutions.co.uk

*Note: The majority of hand held machines are self-certificated to comply with the CE requirements. This means that the manufacturers/suppliers are themselves responsible for stating that the machine complies with the minimum safety requirements and ensuring that information on vibration is contained within the technical file. Some manufacturers/suppliers may not fully be aware of their responsibilities with regard to vibration and may have incorrectly certified their machinery.