

Car dealership fined after employees exposed to risks from vibrating tools

- Two employees diagnosed with Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) following repeated exposure.
- One worker says he had symptoms of HAVS for around eight years.
- Guidance to keep staff safe is available.

A car dealership franchise in Devon and Cornwall has been fined more than £200,000 after two of its workers were diagnosed with Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS).

The pair were diagnosed with the condition in November 2022 following repeated exposure to vibration from working for Rows Garage Ltd at its bodyshop in Truro. They regularly used hand tools like random-orbital sanders and reciprocating saws for car body repairs.

Prolonged and regular exposure to vibration can affect a worker's health resulting in painful and disabling disorders of the nerves, blood supply, joints and muscles of the hands and arms. These disorders are collectively known as HAVS and the risk of onset or worsening of it increases with daily exposure and varies widely between individuals. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance can be found [here](#).

One of the affected employees, who did not wish to be named, said: "It's hard to say exactly how long I have had the symptoms for, but I think maybe about eight years.

"My fingers would go white and I'd lose feeling. This was particularly bad in damp or cold weather.

"I can say that over the years my symptoms seem to have got worse. The blanching has spread and I find it hard to pick up small items."

The HSE investigation found that Rows Garage had not put in place adequate management arrangements to assess and monitor the exposure of its employees to vibration. There was no suitable and sufficient risk assessment and control measures had not been implemented despite the likelihood of the exposure action value being exceeded.

Employees were not informed of the risk via information, instruction or training. Additionally, despite both employees reporting symptoms of ill health for a number of years, the company failed to take sufficient action to reduce their exposures.

Rows Garage Ltd of Vertu House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear (since November 2023), pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £204,000 and ordered to pay £8,099 in costs at Plymouth Magistrates' Court on 8 May 2025.

HSE inspector Emma O'Hara said "Rowes Garage Ltd had been exposing employees to the risks arising from the use of vibrating tools for a significant period of time.

"They fell below expected standards which has been reflected in the fine that has been imposed. HAVS is a serious and disabling permanent condition and HSE will not hesitate to take action against employers that fall below the expected standard."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Jonathan Bambro, and Paralegal Rebecca Forman.

Further information:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant HSE guidance can be found
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).
6. HAVS is an occupational disease reportable under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).