

Chemical manufacturer fined £100,000 after failing to protect workers from vibration risks

A West Midlands chemical manufacturer has been fined £100,000 after failing to protect employees from the health risks associated with the use of vibrating tools.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was prompted by nine reports of Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) being made to the regulator.

The investigation found that workers at Robinson Brothers Ltd had been using vibrating equipment over a 14-year period without adequate measures in place to manage the risk of developing the condition.

Birmingham Magistrates' Court heard how employees at the company's West Bromwich site carried out a range of maintenance and civil engineering tasks using tools such as grinders and road breakers. Despite this, the company had not taken steps to properly assess or control their exposure to vibration.

HAVS is a serious condition caused by regular and prolonged use of hand-held vibrating tools. It can lead to permanent damage affecting the nerves, blood vessels, muscles and joints of the hand, wrist and arm. Symptoms can include pain, tingling, numbness and loss of strength – making everyday tasks such as fastening buttons or holding utensils difficult or impossible.

HSE inspectors found that the company's risk assessment was neither suitable nor sufficient. Control measures, such as removing the need to use vibrating tools, using lower vibration alternatives, or limiting exposure times, had not been implemented. Health surveillance arrangements did not include checks for HAVS, and employees had not received training on the risks they faced.

HSE guidance, available [here](#), and in the HSE publication [Hand-arm vibration – The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 \(L140\)](#), describes the risks to employees' health and safety from exposure to HAVS, and sets out practical guidance to help employers fulfil their legal obligation to control these risks. It includes advice on the assessment of risk, ways to control exposure, and in-depth information about health surveillance.

Robinson Brothers Ltd, of Phoenix Street, West Bromwich, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 5(1), 6(1), 7(1) and 8(1) of the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005. The company was fined £100,000 and ordered to pay £6,761.40 in costs at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on Friday 27 June 2025.

HSE inspector Claire Coleman said:

"The effects of exposure to vibration can be debilitating and once damage is done, it is irreversible. The effects can make it difficult or impossible to

do things like hold a pen, fasten buttons or use a knife and fork.

“It cannot be underestimated how important it is that employers take the necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of their employees should they need to use vibrating hand tools.

“The available guidance is extensive and straightforward to follow and includes tools to assist in deciding what is needed to protect employees. HSE will not hesitate to act against companies which do not do all that they should to keep employees safe.”

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyers Edward Parton and Samantha Tiger, and paralegal officer Sarah Thomas.

Notes to Editors

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 guidance can be found here [Hand arm vibration at work](#)
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](#).