

Company fined after workers develop Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

Design and Supply Limited has today been fined after a worker was exposed to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS).

Merthyr Tydfil Magistrates' Court heard how an employee of the company was exposed to vibration from the use of handheld pneumatic buffing and sanding tools over a period of 15 years causing him to develop HAVS.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company failed to implement a safe system of work in order to control the risk of exposure to vibration. The company had not carried out a suitable risk assessment of work activities from the use of the power tools resulting in poor control measures. The company had not provided adequate information, instruction and training for employees or supervisors which resulted in inadequate control measures when working and a lack of adequate supervision. The court heard employees were exposed to vibration levels that had not been reduced to as low as was reasonably practicable thereby increasing their risk of developing HAVS. The investigation also found the company had did not have a suitable health surveillance system in place which is vital to identify symptoms at an early stage.

Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) is a serious condition caused by regular and frequent exposure to hand arm vibration. Regular and frequent exposure can lead to permanent health effects. HAVS can result in tingling, numbness, pain and loss of strength in the hands causing distress and sleep disturbance, affecting the ability to do work safely.

Design and Supply Limited of Pant Industrial Estate, Merthyr Tydfil, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and has been fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £1,881.70.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Lee Jones said, "This was a case of the company completely failing to understand the importance of assessing the risk to their employees from exposure to vibration and therefore putting in place the correct control measures.

"If they had understood why health surveillance was necessary, it would have ensured that it had the right systems in place to monitor worker's health and the employee's condition would have not have been allowed to develop to a severe and life altering stage."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted

interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.