

How Can We Better Prevent Hand-Arm Vibration Injuries on Our Project?



PRESENTED BY:

MEETING START TIME:

DATE OF MEETING:

MEETING END TIME:

Keep the Conversation Going with a Safety Talk Question:

Which HAVS prevention tip do you think would be the hardest to follow on your jobsite?

1. What is Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)?

- a. HAVS is a painful occupational injury caused by prolonged use of vibrating hand tools. The condition is characterized by nerve damage, musculoskeletal problems, and vascular damage. Symptoms include finger discoloration, reduced grip strength, numbness and tingling. Once fully developed, it is permanent, but early diagnosis and proper treatment can prevent it from worsening.

2. Tips for Prevention: Now that we know the risk — the first step in prevention — here are best practices for avoiding the syndrome:

- a. **Training:** Be prepared by becoming informed. Take a formal course to learn the details of the risk, proper tool usage, how to recognize symptoms, and best practices for response and treatment.
- b. **Hand Care:** Keep hands warm and dry to prevent cold from constricting blood vessels. Wear gloves for insulation and to avoid bare contact with vibrating tools.
- c. **Ergonomics:** Keep a light grip to minimize vibration transfer. Avoid awkward postures that require extra force.
- d. **Limit Exposure:** Pre-planning should include how tool time will be minimized throughout the jobsite. Use tools for short intervals instead of long continuous operation. Take 10- to 15-minute breaks per hour when using vibrating tools. Do not use vibrating tools for more than 2-3 hours daily and do not use impact or power tools for more than 15 minutes daily.
- e. **Tools:** Use low-vibration models with correctly sized handles. Refrain from using older, worn tools that vibrate more. Complete regular tool maintenance (replace bearings, bits, chisels, etc.) to prevent unbalanced rotating parts and unsharpened edges, which can generate excessive vibration.
- f. **Engineering:** Implement vibration-dampening measures including vibration isolators, isolation mounts, and damping material (felts, mastics, elastomeric sheets).
- g. **Nicotine:** Avoid or limit smoking or vaping, which increases constriction of blood vessels and thus increases the risk of exposure.
- h. **Monitoring:** Know the indicators, which include weakness, tingling, and numbness. In cold temperatures, finger blanching is a sign. Complete an annual physical exam.
- i. **Reporting:** If you experience a symptom or recognize one in a co-worker, do not hesitate. Immediately inform a supervisor.

Sources:

1. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/212030>
2. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/209776>
3. <https://www.osha.gov/etools/woodworking/health-hazards/vibration>

Worker Comments / Feedback:

To be signed by all employees, contract workers, clients and others who participated in the safety talk prior to commencing work.

Signatures:

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