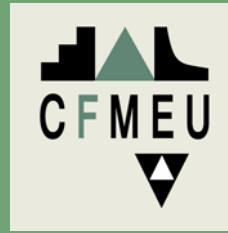


“Simple changes to work practices can minimise the level of wood dust in the workplace”



If you have any concerns about wood dust, contact your union or organiser immediately



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FORESTRY

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Wood Dust



Fact Sheet



Fact Sheet: Wood Dust

“What are the health effects of wood dust?”

The manufacture of wood products such as architrave and skirting mouldings, furniture, doors and windows often results in the generation of fine airborne wood particles and dust. Typical wood-working activities that produce dust are machining operations (e.g. sawing, routing, turning) and sanding (hand or machine). Other sources of breathable wood dust are the bagging of dust from dust extraction systems, using compressed air to blow dust off articles and dry sweeping of factory floors, etc.

MDF Vs OTHER FORMS OF WOOD

It is documented that the ill-health effects associated with dust exposure arising from the machining of MDF **are no different** from those effects arising from machining other forms of wood. It is also important to note that when working with particleboard and fibreboard, there is a low risk of exposure to formaldehyde. Information provided by Australian manufacturers of the boards indicates that the release of formaldehyde gas from unsealed boards supplied to workplaces is well below the accepted exposure limits.



WHAT ARE THE HEALTH HAZARDS?

Health effects associated with exposure to dust from wood products may include:

- allergic dermatitis
- asthma and impairment of lung function
- irritation of the nose
- rhinitis (runny nose)
- violent sneezing
- blocked nose and nose bleeds
- throat irritation
- sore and watering eyes

Nasal cancer has also been reported in people who have worked in very dusty wood-working environments with little or no dust control in place.

MANAGING THE RISKS

Controlling the build up of wood dust

The nature of wood-working is such that total elimination of wood dust from the work environment is not usually practicable. However, the health risk associated with exposure to dust from wood products can be minimised through:

- using a process or method of work that reduces the generation of dust to a minimum
- providing dust capturing equipment to all dust-producing processes; e.g. local exhaust ventilation at wood working machines and dust bags on tools
- maintaining plant and equipment in good condition

Monitoring dust levels

Even with the use of recommended dust control techniques, it may not be practicable to prevent exposure to wood dust. If there is uncertainty about whether there is a risk to health from exposure to dust from wood products, air monitoring may need to be carried out.

The risk to health needs to be assessed taking into account the nature of the work, duration of exposure and control measures in place.

Improving housekeeping to minimise dust

Simple changes to work practices can minimise the level of wood dust in the workplace:

- clean/empty dust collection equipment regularly
- use dustless methods for cleaning up (wet clean up, damping down before sweeping, using an industrial vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter)
- **do not use compressed air to clear work benches/ blow dust off wood products**
- implement a ‘clean up as you go’ policy
- provide and use respiratory protective equipment

When other dust control measures are not practicable, a respiratory protective device (RPD) suitable for particulates should be worn. Australian / New Zealand Standard **AS/NZS 1715: Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective devices** provides comprehensive guidance on how to select the correct type of RPD.

OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

Information, instruction and training should be provided:

- health and safety information from the wood supplier or manufacturer to inform employees on the hazards & risks associated with exposure to wood dust
- training on the correct use of control measures adopted at the workplace
- supervision to ensure the adopted control measures being utilised
- reducing the chance of dust explosion by keeping ignition sources such as flame and sparks away from location where dust is being generated

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

Your Workplace Health & Safety Representative:

Name:

Phone:

Your Union Organiser:

Name:

Phone:



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