

# WD9

## COSHH essentials for woodworkers



This information will help employers and the self-employed comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure to wood dust and protect workers health.

It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice using dust extraction.

It covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

### Main points

- Make sure the controls work.

# Stand-alone dust collector (occasional use)

## Control approach 2 Engineering control

### Hazard

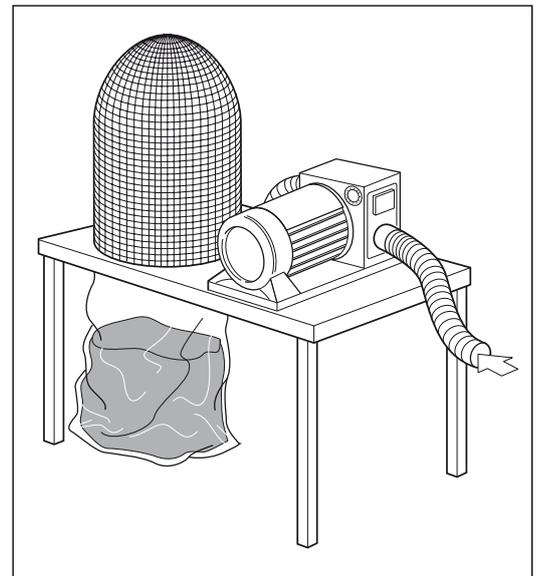
- ✓ Wood dust includes dust from hardwood, softwood and composite boards such as MDF.
- ✓ Wood dust can cause cancer, dermatitis, and serious lung diseases including asthma.
- ✓ The dermatitis risk is high for softwoods.
- ✓ The asthma risk applies to high dust levels in the short-term as well as the long-term. It is highest for woods like Western Red Cedar.
- ✓ Control exposure to stop occupational asthma developing. If an individual does develop occupational asthma, avoid further exposure.
- ✓ When all controls are applied properly, less than 5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> wood dust is usually achievable (based on an 8-hour time-weighted average).

### Access and premises

- ✓ Only allow access to authorised staff.

### Equipment

- ✓ Provide permanent dust extraction equipment wherever possible - see other sheets in this WD series.
- ✓ Locate the portable unit as close to the machine as possible, to avoid long sections of flexible duct.
- ✓ Fit a manometer or pressure gauge near the extraction point, to show that the system is working properly.



### Procedures

- ✓ Always confirm that the dust extraction is turned on and working at the start of work. Check the gauge.
- ✓ Stand away from the unit just as it is turned on - avoid the dust cloud as the filter bag inflates.
- ✓ Replace damaged fabric filters or holed waste bags immediately. Keep enough spares.

**Caution: Do not let the waste bag over-fill.**

---

### Maintenance, examination and testing

- ✓ Keep equipment in effective and efficient working order - follow instructions in maintenance manuals.
- ✓ Daily, look for signs of damage. Noisy or vibrating fans can indicate a problem.
- ✓ Repair faulty extraction systems as soon as possible. Meanwhile, wear RPE.
- ✓ At least once a week, check that the dust extraction system and gauges work properly.
- ✓ You need to know the manufacturer's specifications to check the extraction's performance.
- ✓ If this information isn't available, hire a competent ventilation engineer to determine the performance needed for effective control.
- ✓ The engineer's report must show the target extraction rates.
- ✓ Keep this information in your testing logbook.
- ✓ Get a competent ventilation engineer to examine the system thoroughly and test its performance at least once every 14 months. See the HSE publication HSG54 - see 'Further information'.
- ✓ Keep records of all examinations and tests for at least five years.

### Cleaning and housekeeping

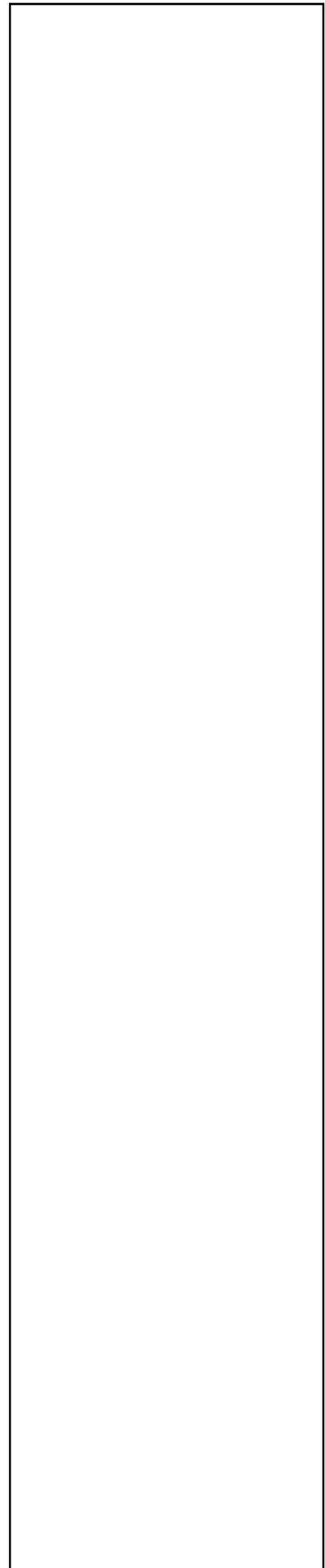
- ✓ Clean the machinery and work area every day. Regular cleaning will help you find dust leaks.
  - ✓ Use a Class H vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter to clear up dust.
- Caution: Don't use a brush or compressed air for cleaning surfaces and clothing.**

### Training and supervision

- ✓ Tell your workers that wood dust can cause asthma, cancer and dermatitis. Tell them what the early signs of asthma are.
- ✓ Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet WD0.
- ✓ Include supervisors and managers in health and safety training.
- ✓ Ask your local Learning Skills Council or trade association for advice on training providers.

### Further information

- *Maintenance, examination and testing of local exhaust ventilation* HSG54 (Second edition) HSE Books 1998 ISBN 978 0 7176 1485 1
- Woodworking Information Sheets - [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/woodindx.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/woodindx.htm)
- For environmental guidelines, see sheet WD0



---

### Useful links

- HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books  
Tel: 01787 881165 Website: [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk).
- For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com).
- Contact the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) on 01332 298101 or at [www.bohs.org](http://www.bohs.org) for lists of qualified hygienists who can help you.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services' for 'occupational health'.
- Also see [www.nhsplus.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsplus.nhs.uk).

### Employee checklist

- Is the extraction switched on and working properly, with the guard correctly adjusted?  
Check the gauge.
- Look for signs of leaks, wear and damage.
- If you find any problems, tell your supervisor. Don't just carry on working.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.