

## Report of Human Resources Manager

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### **Subject: Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) Policy**

#### Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek formal approval from NPA, for the adoption of the Hand Arm Vibration Policy attached.

#### Background

2. HAVS represents one of the more prominent risks to the health and safety of employees at the National Park Authority - although it doesn't impact a high proportion of Authority employees.
3. HAVS is a condition that has the potential to severely affect any employee who uses vibrating / powered hand-tools or equipment, e.g. chainsaws and strimmers. An employee who is regularly exposed to high vibration holding and/or operating vibrating equipment may suffer from reduced blood circulation and damage to the nerves and muscles.
4. To ensure continued compliance with the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005, our three-yearly policy review programme and a more rigorous approach to 'risk assessment' for staff using vibrating equipment, the Human Resources team have consulted staff and managers across the Authority to develop an overarching policy and approach on HAVS.
5. As part of the wider consultation process, the NPA should note that members of both the Audit and Corporate Service Committee and members of the HR Committee have been consulted and commented on the policy.
6. In line with the Authority's delegation protocols, NPA members are asked to provide further comment and ultimately approve the new Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome policy before it is adopted in practice.

#### Scope

7. The Authority have, for a long time, supported measures enshrined in the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 and other health and safety legislation, to ensure that any risks (related to HAVS) are reduced to a minimum level and / or removed wherever possible.

8. The HAVS Policy aims to ensure that measures already in place, and new ones, for staff using vibrating equipment are properly documented, ensuring that managers and staff understand their personal responsibilities for mitigating any associated risks.
9. The Policy sets out expectations for certain risk controls to be put in place, including the use of monitoring equipment for vibrating machinery, three yearly machine/operator assessments for staff using vibrating tools and annual Occupational Health assessment.
10. The overarching Policy will sit above, what will be a thorough programme of monitoring, supported by training and documented health and safety instruction.

### **Programme of Monitoring**

11. Equipment to measure vibration magnitude of all vibrating machinery across the Authority has been recently purchased. A programme of monitoring has commenced, with testing completed for the South and North Warden teams. Testing is being progressed with the West Warden team, Rangers and Caretaking staff who also use vibrating machinery.
12. The Authority have for several years carried out annual health questionnaires for staff using vibrating machinery. There are currently 37 employees requiring an annual HAVS assessment and at potential risk.
13. Training has been organised for July to roll out monitoring equipment and software which will monitor individual exposure values, against the work already conducted to understand vibration magnitude of Authority equipment. This will help determine maximum exposure duration times for all vibrating tools relative to individual users, to close any potential gaps and further mitigate any risk.
14. Finally, Human Resources will be working with relevant managers to develop a Resource Plan to manage the impact of an aging workforce and one that is potential at higher risk of health-related injury than other employees.

### **Risk Considerations**

15. The Policy fully complies with UK legislation on HAVS.
16. HAVS is RIDDOR reportable (depending on the extent of diagnosis). Operating vibrating machinery is therefore considered by the HSE as a potential high risk. To protect the health and safety of its employees, the Authority will ensure full compliance of the approved HAVS policy and its management will be reported to the Audit and Corporate Services Committee on a regular basis.

### **Financial Considerations**

17. No further financial considerations.

## Welsh Language Considerations

18. When approved, the policy will be drafted in Welsh to comply with Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

## Human Rights Issues

19. Full consideration of the Human Rights and Equality provisions were considered in drafting the new policy.

**Recommendation: Members are asked to approve the adoption of the Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome Policy (annexed to this paper).  
If amendments are requested to the Policy, members are asked to approve the policy subject to necessary changes.**

*(Further information is available from the Kelland Dickens, Human Resources Manager, on 01646 624825 – email [kellandd@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk](mailto:kellandd@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk))*



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# Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) Policy

## Internal Policy

### Review

Version	Effective Date	Document Owner	Review Date Trigger
V1	27 July 2022	Human Resources Manager	Every three years or in line with new legislation

### Target Audience

All staff (*including volunteers and individuals working under a contract for services*) working with vibrating equipment.

### Consultations

Group	Date
Staff Reps	17 February 2022
Countryside Managers	January 2022
Leadership Team	8 February 2022
Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee	2 March 2022
Human Resources Committee	29 June 2022

### Approvals

Approved by	Name	Date	Signature
NPA		27 July 2022	

### Document Location

Location
Parcnet

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## 1. Policy Statement

Employees who frequently use vibrating equipment are at risk of suffering permanent damage to nerves, blood vessels and joints of the hand, wrist and arm.

Hand-arm vibration can cause Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome and / or Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) caused by exposure to vibration at work is preventable and this policy has been produced in response to the *Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005*, aimed at preventing permanent damage to health.

The Authority will take all responsible steps to ensure the health and safety of its employees, including those who are exposed to vibration in the course of their duties.

The Authority will, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that any risks are reduced to a minimum level or removed wherever possible.

The Authority will ensure that departmental managers carry out adequate risk assessments for using vibrating equipment.

The Authority will ensure that employees who use vibrating equipment receive adequate information and training on precautions to be taken to mitigate any associated risk.

The Authority will ensure that a programme of monitoring is carried out for employees who are at risk from using vibrating equipment.

## 2. Responsibilities

The responsibility for implementing the requirements of this policy rest with each Director and department/functional manager.

The Countryside Managers are responsible for ensuring measures (HAVi) provided by the Authority to regularly monitor exposure levels of staff using vibrating equipment, are carried out on a regular basis.

All staff working with vibrating equipment are responsible for their own and others health and safety and are expected to fully comply with this policy and any associated risk assessments in place.

Human Resources are responsible for implementing an annual health assessment programme for all staff using vibrating equipment and reporting any RIDDOR reportable incidents.

## 3. Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)

HAVS is vibration transmitted from equipment into a workers' hands and arms. It is a general term embracing various kinds of damage, including:

- Vascular disorders such as Vibration White Finger causing impaired blood circulation and blanching of affected fingers and part of the hand:
- Neurological and muscular damage leading to pain and numbness in the fingers and hands, reducing grip strength and dexterity and reduced sensitivity to touch and temperature; and

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- Other passive kinds of damage leading to pain and stiffness in the joints of the wrists, elbows and shoulders.

HAVS is a reportable disease under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)\*\* may also be reportable under certain circumstances.

\*\*The carpal tunnel is a small tunnel that runs from the bottom of the wrist to the lower palm. CTS occurs when the nerve from the forearm into the hand becomes squeezed at the wrist. CTS is a relatively common condition that causes pain, numbness and a burning or tingling sensation in hands and fingers. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

The effects of HAVS on an employee can include:

- Reduced flexibility and strength of grip.
- Inability to do detailed work.
- Inability to work with hand-held equipment.
- Pain and resulting sleep disturbances.
- Difficulty in working outdoors during inclement weather with symptoms caused by cold and / or damp weather conditions.

### 4. Causes

Jobs requiring regular and frequent work with vibrating equipment are most likely to result in an employee suffering from HAVS. Examples of vibrating equipment used by the Authority include:

- Chainsaws.
- Strimmer and Brush cutters.
- Powered lawn mowers.
- Wood machining tools such as hand-fed circular saws.

It also includes other equipment such as Hammer drills, Power hammers/chisels and Kerb saws.

The risk of developing HAVS depends on a number of factors such as:

- The amount of vibration produced by the tool.
- How often the tool is used.
- How long the tool is used for on each occasion.
- The way the tool is used.
- Working conditions, including posture and weather conditions.
- The general health of the individual.

Some employees may develop symptoms after only a few months exposure to vibrating equipment, whilst for others it may take years.

### 5. Risk Assessments and HAVi Technology

The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations require employers to assess the vibration risk to employees and ensure the risk is either eliminated at source or where not reasonably practicable, reduced to as low a level as practicable.

Managers MUST ensure that Risk Assessments are carried out on all vibrating equipment in order to assess the risk caused by working with the equipment. Risk Assessments once completed will be signed off by the Human Resources Manager.

Where the Risk Assessment indicates that an employee is likely to be exposed above the Daily Exposure Value or the Daily Exposure Limit Value, action must be taken to control the risk.

Furthermore, as the Authority has a general duty to protect the health of employees under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, even exposure below the daily limits should result in acts to eliminate or reduce vibration risk to as low a level as practicable.

The Authority have invested considerably in technology to measure Actual Vibration Magnitude (AVM) of its equipment and HAVI+ technology to measure Trigger Time and uses of AVM to calculate HAVs exposure of staff using tools. This is in line with the legal requirements of the CVWR 2005 and in line with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance.

Continual monitoring is NOT a requirement of the regulations and the HSE do not support this. However, the Authority will carry out periodic measuring.

## 6. Risk Controls

Managers should consider the following controls to mitigate risk from vibration. Specifically:

1. Considering alternative working methods which eliminate or reduce exposure to vibration, including automation and mechanisation.
2. Replacing old equipment and tools and selecting the lowest vibration tool that is available, for example chain saws with anti-vibration mountings. Managers should check with suppliers and compare vibration emission information for different models.
3. Reconfiguring and spreading workloads resulting in equipment being used for shorter periods of time.
4. Ensuring equipment is adequate and fit for purpose. Equipment that is too small or not powerful enough is likely to take longer to complete a task and expose an employee to risk for longer than necessary.
5. Undertaking regular maintenance and monitoring of equipment. In order to minimise the deterioration of equipment and ensure equipment is being used correctly, items should be inspected and serviced on a regular basis. Advice from the suppliers/manufacturers should be taken into account.
6. Providing regular information and training to employees using vibrating equipment.
7. Reviewing and updating Risk Assessments on a regular basis.
8. Ensuring employees are properly equipped with PPE to keep them both warm and dry, encouraging good blood circulation. Gloves should be worn where feasible to keep hands warm.
9. Talking to staff regularly about whether there are any vibration problems with any equipment and the way it is being used.

It is PNCPA's policy to purchase, where ever possible, machines of the lowest vibration value.

Employees should consider the following controls to mitigate risk from vibration:

1. Inform your manager about any equipment that produces too high a level of vibration so risks can be properly managed.
2. Maintain blood flow in fingers by keeping warm at work and wearing warm gloves and extra clothes if required.
3. Exercise hands and fingers regularly to improve circulation.
4. Use the right equipment for the job.
5. Do not use greater physical force than necessary to grip or direct equipment.
6. Avoid lengthy exposure to equipment without breaks – short burst are better.



7. Keep tools in good working order.
8. Take an active part in health and safety training - even if you think you know all the facts, it's a good refresher.
9. Do not ignore symptoms and report relevant medical factors such as diagnosis of diabetes for example.

Managers and employees should be vigilant of early symptoms of HAVS or CTS which include:

- Tingling and numbness in the fingers.
- Fingertips going white and becoming red and painful on recovery (particularly in cold or wet weather).
- Not being able to feel things properly.
- Loss of strength in the hands.

If any of these symptoms are present, advice should be sought from HR immediately and a referral to Occupational Health made. In addition, all employees will be made aware that if at any point they feel an individual tool or piece of machinery has deteriorated in terms of vibration, they must report this immediately so that further investigations can be made.

## 7. Exposure Values

When undertaking Risk Assessments, managers should be mindful of both EAV and ELV values.

The exposure action value (EAV) is a daily amount of vibration exposure above which employers are required to take specific action to control exposure. For hand-arm vibration the EAV is a daily exposure of 2.5 m/s<sup>2</sup> A(8) – equivalent to 100 points using the HSE calculator.

The exposure limit value (ELV) is the maximum amount of vibration an employee may be exposed to on any single day. For hand-arm vibration the ELV is a daily exposure of 5 m/s<sup>2</sup> A(8) – equivalent to 400 points using the HSE calculator.

It should be noted that even if an employees' exposure is below the daily exposure value, the Authority still has a general duty of care and vibration risk to employees should be eliminated to as low a level as reasonably practicable.

## 8. Employee Health Assessments

Human Resources will organise health assessments with Occupational Health for all employees at risk. The frequency of surveillance shall be annual unless a greater frequency is decided by Occupational Health based on individual circumstances.

The purpose of which is to:

- Identify anyone exposed who may be of particular risk, e.g. for people with blood circulatory diseases such as Raynaud's Disease.
- Identify any vibration related symptoms at an early stage.
- Help prevent disease progression and help staff stay in work
- Check the effectiveness of vibration control measures.

The assessment programme is provided through a 5 Tier system starting with a self-assessment questionnaire (Tier 1) to establish the status of employees working with vibrating equipment, through to specialist medical testing for HAVS at Tier 5.

All new employees at risk of HAVS will be required to undergo a health assessment before commencing work.

In addition, an employee leaving will undergo assessment, unless they have been screening in the last 6 months, to provide an adequate pre-exit health status record.

Human Resources will coordinate, through departmental managers, the monitoring of equipment and individual use of equipment, to measure exposure to Hand Arm Vibration. This will be done on a three yearly basis for existing equipment and when purchasing new equipment.

### 9. Reference

1	POL039	Health & Safety Policy
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### 10. Version History

Version	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
1	27 July 2022	Adoption of formal policy

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