

Solution to HAVS

ATR Group has launched a package of measures to help employers reduce the risks of HAVS among their workforce. The company which specialises in supplying plant and equipment to the oil and gas industry has adopted a user-friendly 'traffic light' system that allows for the effective monitoring of operations by classifying vibration levels by risk and setting recommended usage limits.

ATR's offering also includes providing a high level of low-vibration, quality tooling and operational advice, full IOSH-standard training for technicians and in-house product familiarisation training if required.

Around 3,000 new cases of Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) are identified annually. It is one of the major occupational health issues in the oil and gas industry and there has been a marked increase in compensation claims from sufferers.

HAVS results from regular use of vibrating tools - HSE figures suggest that around five million workers in the UK are exposed to hand-arm vibration at work. Vibration white finger, the vascular component of the condition, is a prescribed industrial disease, meaning sufferers can claim compensation under the industrial injuries scheme. Employers looking to address the issue need to know what the risks are and how they can be managed.

They need to monitor the use of tools by staff, adopt proper training systems and ensure tools are properly designed, constructed and maintained. They need to have an overall approach that ensures employees are not over-exposed to high levels of vibration from equipment.

The Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 require employers to take specific courses of action in relation to exposure to vibration. The framework for this is a complex vibration measuring formula accompanied by set exposure limits.

Bruce McIntosh, operations manager at ATR Group said: "Our approach is supported by our HAVS management programme that covers every piece of equipment we provide. The programme puts emphasis on: sustaining a complete maintenance and service history; providing, for all equipment, the results of process tests (simulated tests that seek to replicate the application and record vibration levels); maintaining a HAVS register; deploying the 'traffic light' system, recording exposure time and providing a full certification package to customers.

"The programme puts employers in a stronger position in relation to demonstrating their compliance with HAVS legislation, illustrating their proactive approach to the maintenance, repair and testing of equipment prior to use by personnel.

"We also offer services in relation to client-owned plant and equipment - including independent advice on 'best tool for the job'; a maintenance, repair and certification service for client-owned tools; and HAVS and Portable Appliance Testing on all equipment.

"Employers need to take rigorous measures to address HAVS and demonstrate that they are doing so, to protect personnel from a potentially-serious health condition and the company from the consequences of not complying."