Wood Dust Safety

Wood dust is a significant workplace hazard that has been shown to have devastating health impacts on many individuals who are exposed to it over the course of their work. In fact, wood dust is the biggest hazard to a woodworker since it can cause the most long-term damage. So, how does it affect a wood worker’s health?

**Long-Term Damage**

Exposure to wood dust has long been associated with a variety of adverse health effects. Wood dust is designated by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as a class 1 carcinogen, or a confirmed human carcinogen. In addition, wood dust can cause tiny wounds and scarring to our lungs leading to significantly decreased lung capacity.

**Irritants**

Wood dust exposure can lead to irritation of skin, eyes and the upper respiratory tract. In fact, prolonged or repeated exposure to certain species of wood dust, Western Red Cedar being the most notable, can lead to the development of allergies and asthma.

**Sensitizers**

Frequent or long exposure to wood dust can cause rashes or boils, severe sinus or respiratory pain/inflammation.

**WHY HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER?**

Health and Safety is a priority at BCIT. OHS newsletters contain monthly first aid statistics, compliance concerns, and updates of new legislation and interest articles.
**Controlling Wood Dust**

Per WorkSafeBC regulations, exposures to wood dust needs to be kept as low as reasonably achievable, and below the applicable exposure limits.

BCIT is using several effective measures in controlling exposures to wood dust. The use of these controls should be prioritized according to the following list:

- **Elimination/Substitution**—Whenever practical, more toxic wood should be substituted with less toxic wood.
- **Engineering Controls**—Local exhaust ventilation and dust collection must be used to control wood dust at the source.
- **Administrative Controls**—Inspections of areas where there is a potential for the generation or accumulation of wood dust, education of employees and students regarding hazards and controls, and regular housekeeping.
- **Personal Protective Equipment**—A fit tested CSA approved dust mask should be used to protect against inhalation of wood dust whenever the other controls are inadequate.

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**April 2017 First Aid Summary Report**

The chart indicates the number of injuries from each person type (Student, Employee, Contractor), and the proportion of injuries for each school.

To view the most recent first aid report [CLICK HERE](#)