Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome
What we’ll cover today

- What is Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)?
- Things to look out for
- When are you at risk?
- How you can reduce the risk
- The importance of Health Surveillance
What is Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)?

HAVS affects your hands, wrists and arms. It’s caused by repeated use of hand held vibrating tools. Some people may be affected sooner than others. The effects of HAVS can be permanent and disabling.
Effects of HAVS

- Numbness or tingling of fingers
- Loss of sensitivity
- Fingers may go white especially in cold weather
- Loss of strength in hands
- Pains in hands or wrists
When am I at risk?

You are at risk if you **regularly use** hand held or hand power tools and machines such as:

- Breakers, concrete pokers
- Sanders, grinders, disc cutters
- Hammer drills
- Chainsaws, brush cutters
- Hedge trimmers
- Needle gun.
Vibration facts

- Vibration is measured by the amount of time you operate each tool – often known as ‘trigger time’.
- Each tool will vary in the amount of vibration it gives you.
- Older equipment that is not well maintained will increase your vibration exposure.
- There are guidelines as to how much exposure a person should have over a normal shift.
- If you reach the maximum exposure time for one tool don’t automatically assume you can then use another tool producing the same vibration.
Reducing your risk

REDUCING YOUR RISK CHECKLIST 1
1. Always use the tool in the right way for example use the handles rather than holding the body of the tool.
2. Always use the right tool for the job.
3. Check that the tool is in good working order before use.
4. Ask to use suitable low vibration tools.

REDUCING YOUR RISK CHECKLIST 2
1. Keep your hands warm and dry to encourage blood flow.
2. Cut down or quit smoking as smoking reduces blood flow to your fingers.
3. Keep your fingers moving during break to maintain good circulation.
4. If you have any worries tell your manager as soon as you notice a problem.
Reducing the Risk

Your line manager can assist in reducing your risk of developing HAVS by arranging for employees to rotate the tasks using vibrating tools.

This will ensure that the risk is shared amongst the team rather than one employee getting all of the vibration exposure.

You must follow the task rotation instructions given by your line manager.

Network Rail is working to continually progress the management of HAVS. Speak to your line manager or safety advisor if you have any improvement ideas.
Do anti-vibration gloves work?

No.

There is **no proof** that anti vibration gloves will reduce your exposure to vibration. The only benefit of wearing gloves are that they keep your hands warm so **help with your circulation**.
Health Surveillance

- **Participation** in Health Surveillance is mandatory for those employees who are deemed at risk of health concerns from the use of vibrating tools.

- Health Surveillance is a **yearly check** which may be either a questionnaire or a face to face appointment.

- You **don’t** have to **wait** for your annual review – if you have symptoms report them as soon as you can.

- Health Surveillance is aimed at helping you **spot** any **signs** of HAVS as **early as possible**, allowing you to stay at work and to give you **advice** on how to look after hands.

- Your line manager will be given advice on your **ability to work** with vibrating tools – this could include advice to use vibrating tools for **reduced periods of time**.
Key points

☐ Work safely by using the right tools, for the right job, in the right way

☐ Learn to spot signs of HAVS early

☐ Report any health worries to your manager so that they can refer you for help and guidance from Occupational Health

☐ Take part in Health Surveillance when asked

☐ For more information visit: Occupational Health and Wellbeing on Connect or Safety Central.