



***Wood dust regulation  
and prevention  
- a trade union  
perspective***

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# *Scientific evaluation*

Wood dust exposure = risks for

- Cancer
- Allergic and non-allergic dermal and airway responses
- Irritation

How to transfer this knowledge into regulation and prevention?



# ***Carcinogen Directive***

... the workers concerned are exposed to a serious potential risk of developing cancer

... workers must be effectively protected from the risks of developing cancer as a result of occupational exposure to hardwood dusts

... the aim of this Directive is not to restrict the use of wood either by replacing it with other materials or by replacing the use of certain types of wood with other types of wood



# *Limit values*

1999/38 Directive: Hard wood dust = 5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>

This is a technical value, which is not based on scientific evidence → The Commission may within two years ... submit a proposal of revised limit value for hard wood dusts

Dutch recommendation: 0,2 mg/m<sup>3</sup>

SCOEL: 0,5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>

Commission proposal: ?



# The social partners

## Employer position on wood dust

“CEI-Bois asks (...) the respective national affiliates to request the national authorities to **instruct SCOEL to withdrawn its proposal for reducing the demand on wood dust in the working atmosphere to 0,5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and to keep the demand on 5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> (...)**”.

[*Own translation, Nytt fra RAMIT, 1-2003*]



# ***Employer comment***

CEI-Bois states in an comment to SCOEL that

- the data evaluated by SCOEL do not allow the recommendation of a health-based occupational exposure limit
- no adenocarcinoma have ever been observed at exposure levels below 10 mg/m<sup>3</sup>
- the established limit value of 5 mg/m<sup>3</sup> seems to be adequate



# ***NFBWW perspective***

Basically, wood dust is harmful to workers health

Any doubts of health effects should lead to regulation in favour of the workers (principle of precaution)

The limit value of wood dust = 0,5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>

This demand is **reasonable** according to

- scientific evidence on health effects
- the technical measures of prevention and
- the actual levels of exposure



# ***NFBWW perspective***

Both hard and soft wood dust must be regulated and exposure prevented

On top of hard wood dust, soft wood dust should be included into the Carcinogen Directive



# *Improving protection*

Risk assessment to be conducted

Determine whether any hazardous chemical agents are present at the workplace

If so, assess any risk, including

- their hazardous properties
- the level, type and duration of exposure
- the circumstances of work
- any occupational exposure limit values
- the effect of preventive measures taken or to be taken



# *Limiting exposure*

Nowadays levels of wood dust are often below 0,5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>

In fact, it is possible to reduce the exposure to all most zero

## **Swedish example, late 1990s**

Goal for not exceeding 0,3 mg/m<sup>3</sup> was reached

Important factors for success:

- the commitment from personnel
- support from management and the trade union
- competent technical advice



# *Limiting exposure*

Lesson learned from the Swedish case:

Reducing wood dust → added value

- better work environment
- reducing cleaning time
- better quality
- more effective and profitable production



# ***Prevention of exposure***

Wood dust exposure must be prevented:

- Cleaning with brooms and compressed air should be prohibited and replaced with vacuum cleaning
- Mechanical means (extraction) must be used to eliminate wood dust at the point of origin
- Employers shall be aware of their responsibility
- Workers shall be trained in appropriate precautionary measures designed to minimise the release of wood dust

- actually, it is quite simple



# ***Wood dust - no thanks!***

Worker participation, for what reason?

Worker participation is the determinant of successful occupational health and safety management and a major contributing factor in the reduction of occupational diseases and injuries

*- also with respect to wood dust*

**Thank you for your attention!**