

HAND-ARM VIBRATION SYNDROME (HAVS) WORKFORCE IMPACT



HANDS OF VIBRATING PNEUMATIC HAND-TOOL OPERATOR IN LATER STAGES OF IRREVERSIBLE HAND ARM VIBRATION SYNDROME 1

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RARE CASE OF GANGRENE IN HANDS OF VIBRATING PNEUMATIC HAND-TOOL OPERATOR AT TERMINAL STAGE OF IRREVERSIBLE HAND ARM VIBRATION SYNDROME 2

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In the U.S. alone, about 2.5 million workers are exposed daily to hand-arm vibration (HAV) from power tools they use on-their-job. Since 1918, it is documented that daily occupational exposure from many pneumatic, electric, hydraulic or gasoline powered vibrating hand-tools have been causally linked to HAVS. **HAVS is an irreversible medical condition of the fingers/hands, which causes loss of sensation and blood supply to the hands and may cause loss of fingers.** Because HAVS is often misdiagnosed, it is underreported. The documented workplace prevalence of HAV in the U.S. ranges from 20-50% for certain groups of power tool users. This is believed to be a conservative estimate. **Even by conservative estimates, as many as 1.25 million power tool users may be at risk for developing HAVS.**

Anti-vibration (AV) power tools were introduced in the 1980s and anti-vibration (AV) certified gloves were introduced in the 1990s. Since that time, many progressive private sector organizations have purchased AV tools and AV certified gloves and their statistics show an improvement on the HAVS prevalence. **Employing AV tools and AV certified gloves is critical to PREVENTING HAVS.**

The Federal government has begun the effort needed to influence guidance and procurement practices aimed at encouraging the purchase of AV tools and AV certified gloves. **The Department of Defense (DoD) is working closely with the General Services Administration (GSA) and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to make low vibration/low noise tools and certified (third-party tested) anti-vibration gloves available.** Sources of data include European Union Power Hand tool database for vibration (<http://www.vibration.db.umu.se/HavSok.aspx?lang=en>) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) database for power hand tool noise and vibration (<http://www.niosh-sound-vibration/Default.aspx>). Also see "How to Order Low-vibration Power Hand Tools and Anti-vibration Gloves" (http://www.public.navy.mil/navsafecen/Documents/acquisition/Order_LowVib_tools.pdf).

Safety and health professionals play a very important role in HAVS prevention because they are the conduit to educating management and the workforce. As a safety and/or health professional, you have the ability to anticipate, recognize, evaluate and control. You can provide your management with information on the impact HAVS has on the workforce and the implications to readiness. You can also educate the workforce on the hazard itself and on the proper fit and function of the equipment. This HAVS fact sheet was provided for your convenience. **Safety and health professionals are the key to PREVENTING HAVS.** Supplemental information may be found at http://www.public.navy.mil/navsafecen/Pages/acquisition/vibration_acquisition.aspx <http://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/publications.htm>

A publically-available DVD describing HAV issues and providing supplemental technical resources is available to DoD personnel at no cost via the Defense Media Agency at <http://www.defenseimagery.mil>. The DVD, Hand-arm Vibration, Revisited can be located by the identification or PIN number, 807012. Members of the public can purchase the DVD via National Audiovisual Center (NAC) website: www.ntis.gov/products/, email: info@ntis.gov or 800-553-6847. To view the video, please visit the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1ZlaGPL5SwCYTjyzX0fOKYbsKowv11A>.

Should you require assistance in educating management and the workforce, the persons below may be able to assist you:

- GSA Representative: Craig Kuznia, National Customer Service Center: 1-800-375-5283
- Army Representative: Steve Chervak, 410-436-7324, steven.chervak@us.army.mil
- Navy Representative: Mark Geiger, 703-695-4703, mark.geiger1@navy.mil
- AF Representative: Andy Wells, 937-938-3322, andrew.wells@wpafb.af.mil