

HEALTH & SAFETY

**Safety Code of
Practice:
Control of Vibration**

US
UNIVERSITY OF
SUSSEX
BRIGHTON

Executive Summary

A Safety Code of Practice (SCoP) is a university-wide document that supports policies to provide detailed practical information on how to ensure compliance with relevant laws, standards, and regulations, and must be followed by all Faculties and Divisions.

SCoPs are supplemented by associated Guidance documents, which provide additional advice and information on specific topics and are intended to assist in the development of local procedures.

This document is the first in the Safe Management of Equipment C300 series of SCoPs and is intended to support managers and teams in drawing up local operational documents.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing, HR Division

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1. Introduction

The University has a moral and legal obligation to manage vibration hazards presented by activities under its control.

Vibration can cause hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) through regular use of hand-held tools, such as drills, the operation of hand guided equipment, such as powered lawnmowers, holding materials that are being processed by hand-fed machines, such as grinders and wood cutting equipment, and gripping on to other pieces of vibrating equipment, such as vortex mixers.

In addition to HAVS, vibration can also cause whole-body vibration syndrome (WBVS), which mainly affects people who are required to drive vehicles off road such as dumpers, excavators and agricultural tractors.

Occasional exposure to vibration is unlikely to lead to HAVS and WBVS, however, regular exposure can lead to loss of dexterity in the fingers, damage to nerves, blood vessels, muscles and joints in the hands (HAVS), and low back pain (WBVS).

This Safety Code of Practice (SCoP) explains what Faculties and Divisions need to do to identify equipment and activities that potentially cause vibration, identify those who may be regularly exposed, and how to identify and implement suitable control measures to reduce the risk of HAVS and WBVS.

2. Scope

This SCoP applies to all University employees, students, postgraduate researchers, contractors, visitors and others who may be exposed to vibration on University controlled premises or during University managed activities. It covers a wide range of settings, including teaching and research environments, workshops and plant rooms, estates and maintenance work, construction projects, and the use of machinery and powered tools.

This SCoP addresses risks arising from both continuous and intermittent occupational exposure to vibration that may cause HAVS or WBVS. It supports compliance with the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 and other related legislation and should be read in conjunction with applicable University health and safety policies and procedures. Vibration nuisance is outside the scope of this SCoP unless it overlaps with occupational health and safety responsibilities.

This SCoP does not apply to the University's facility management company, Sussex Estates and Facilities (SEF). SEF is responsible for identifying, assessing, and controlling vibration risks arising from activities under its control that may affect its employees and others.

3. Definitions

Carpel Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) – pressure on a nerve in the wrist. It causes tingling, numbness and pain in the hand and fingers. It can take months to recover from it.

Exposure Action Value (EAV) – the daily amount of vibration exposure above which the University is required to take action to control exposure. The greater the exposure level, the

greater the risk and the more action the University will need to take to reduce it. For HAVS, the EAV is a daily exposure of 2.5 m/s² A(8).

Exposure Limit Value (ELV) – the maximum amount of vibration someone may be exposed to on any single day. For HAVS the ELV is a daily exposure of 5 m/s² A(8). It represents a high risk above which people under the University’s control must not be exposed.

Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) – ill-health caused by regular exposure to vibration that is transmitted from work processes into a worker’s hands and arms e.g. through the regular use of hand-held power tools or regularly holding materials that are being processed by machines, such as pedestal grinders.

Magnitude – the level or intensity of the vibration to which someone under the control of the University is exposed, measured as acceleration, in metres per second squared (m/s²).

Whole-Body Vibration Syndrome (WBVS) – ill-health caused by vibration that is transmitted through the seat or feet of workers who regularly drive mobile machines, or other work vehicles, over rough and uneven surfaces as a main part of their job. Large shocks and jolts may cause health risks such as back pain.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Executive Deans of Faculty and Directors of Professional Services

Executive Deans of Faculty and Directors of Professional Services are responsible for ensuring that there is a safe system of work in place to ensure that:

- All activities under their control that create vibration are identified and that vibration risks are considered at the design, planning and procurement stages of any planned works.
- No one under their control is exposed above the statutory Exposure Limit Value, and that exposure above the Exposure Action Value is reduced to as low as reasonably practicable.
- Wherever possible, vibration exposure is eliminated.
- A vibration risk assessment is undertaken where vibration cannot be eliminated from an activity, with oversight from consultative bodies including Faculty Health and Safety Committees or the Campus Operations Safety Group (Divisions).
- Vibration risk assessments are undertaken by competent persons and reviewed periodically or following change.
- Resource is available where a vibration risk assessment needs to be conducted by a competent external consultant.
- Procurement processes prioritise low vibration equipment and tools.
- Arrangements are in place for health surveillance of those who may continue to be exposed to vibration at or above the EAV.
- Information on vibration risks, including how vibration exposure is controlled, is documented and communicated clearly and effectively to those who need to be aware.
- Training and supervision relating to the risk presented by vibration and the control measures to follow are communicated with those involved in activities that create vibration.

- Suitable and effective arrangements are in place for responding to a vibration related emergency or incident.
- Vibration related incidents and near misses are reported on the University's incident reporting system.
- Investigations are carried out of more significant vibration related incidents and near misses, with the aim of identifying remedial or improvement actions that are then implemented, such as the review of existing vibration risk assessments.
- They cooperate and coordinate with other parties, where activities that create vibration may have joint responsibility, or may impact others from outside the Faculty or Division.
- All equipment and facilities relating to the management of vibration are maintained and tested to ensure they remain effective, and records maintained of this.
- Suitable processes are in place for monitoring individual vibration exposure.
- Contractors and third parties are provided with relevant vibration risk and control information before commencing work, where applicable.

4.2 Line Managers, Supervisors, Technical Managers and Principal Investigators

Line Managers, Supervisors, Technical Managers and Principal Investigators are responsible for ensuring that:

- All activities that they oversee that expose people under their control to vibration are identified and that vibration exposure is eliminated from these wherever possible.
- No one under their control is exposed above the statutory Exposure Limit Value and that exposure above the Exposure Action Value is reduced to as low as reasonably practicable.
- A vibration risk assessment is undertaken where vibration cannot be eliminated, with the aim of reducing vibration to as low as reasonably practicable, feeding the outcomes from these into the relevant oversight group, and consulting those involved in the activities in this process.
- Consideration is given in the risk assessment process to the risks of HAVS, WBVS and CTS as applicable.
- A specialist is employed to carry out the vibration risk assessment if the competence to do so is not available within the University community.
- Equipment that exposes people under their control to vibration is clearly labelled with the magnitude of exposure to support monitoring processes.
- Suitable processes are in place for monitoring individual vibration exposure and that they regularly review this data with individuals.
- Those exposed to vibration are identified and required to attend periodic health surveillance.
- Training and information about the outcomes and control measures from vibration risk assessments is shared with their staff, students and others who may be affected by the vibration.
- Arrangements are in place to address emergencies relating to vibration from the activities they oversee.
- Any vibration related incident or near miss is reported on the University's incident reporting system, and that they investigate these.

- Any diagnosed case of Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome or Carpel Tunnel Syndrome is reported on the incident reporting system so that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team can report these to the HSE under RIDDOR.
- Actions from investigations are implemented and communicated, such as the review of existing vibration risk assessments.
- Staff and students are monitored periodically to ensure they continue to understand and follow the control measures in place to protect them from vibration.
- Where there may be joint responsibility for a work area or activity, that they cooperate and coordinate with all parties involved.
- Records are kept of all equipment and facility modifications that have been put in place to protect against vibration, and that these are inspected and maintained periodically, in line with manufacturer guidance.
- Maintenance records for such equipment are stored.

4.3 Senior Construction Health and Safety Manager

The Senior Construction Health and Safety Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- Project Managers are aware of vibration hazards that may be introduced to campus by the contractors they use.
- Contractors procured for projects run by Estates, Facilities and Commercial Services have addressed vibration hazards that they introduce to campus through their risk assessments and method statements.
- Incidents relating to vibration are followed up when related to the activities of Estates, Facilities and Commercial Services and its contractors.

4.4 Staff, Students, Contractors, Third Parties and Visitors

Staff, students, contractors, third parties and visitors are responsible for:

- Complying with all safety arrangements and procedures in place to protect them from risks arising from vibration.
- Cooperating with and following safety instructions, information and training from their Line Manager, Supervisor, Technical Manager, Principal Investigator or other safety personnel.
- Using vibration exposure control measures as instructed, and not misusing, removing or interfering with such measures.
- Attending health surveillance appointments where required.
- Reporting vibration related incidents, near misses or concerns to their Line Manager, Supervisor, Technical Manager, Principal Investigator or other safety personnel, and on the University's incident reporting system.
- Immediately reporting symptoms such as tingling, numbness, blanching or loss of grip strength to their Line Manager, Supervisor, Technical Manager, Principal Investigator or other safety personnel.
- Reporting any defects or faults with equipment or facilities used to control vibration through their local reporting or escalation channels.

5. Requirements

5.1 Risk Assessments & Approvals

5.1.1 General

Faculties and Divisions must carry out a vibration risk assessment where they identify vibration as a risk to those under their control. Table 1 details the daily vibration exposure action and limit values for hand-arm vibration and whole-body vibration. Where exposure is identified above the ELV, immediate action must be taken to reduce exposure below the ELV to as low as reasonably practicable, and work must not continue without additional controls.

In all instances Faculties and Divisions must look to eliminate vibration risk. If this isn't possible then a vibration risk assessment must be carried out and control measures identified and implemented to reduce vibration exposure to as low as reasonably practicable. The vibration risk assessment must:

- Be carried out by a competent person, which may mean procuring the services of an external consultant if the competence does not exist within the University community.
- Identify where there might be a risk from vibration.
- Identify who is likely to be affected.
- Include a reasonable estimate of exposures to those under the Faculty/Division's control (Table 1).
- Identify what needs to be done to protect those affected and comply with the law, including what control measures are required and where.
- Identify any staff who may need to be provided with health surveillance.
- Be recorded and include an action plan for implementing control measures, identifying who is responsible for each action and when it must be implemented by.
- Be reviewed at least every 2 years, or sooner if there is a change which may affect exposure levels.

Faculties and Divisions must make sure that those affected by the vibration risk assessment, and their safety representatives, are consulted through the process.

5.1.2 Hand-Arm Vibration

Faculties and Divisions must review the questions relating to HAVS set out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under '[Do you have a hand-arm vibration problem at work?](#)'. If any of the questions are answered 'yes', then a risk assessment will be required to decide whether further action needs to be taken to reduce exposure, and how this will be done.

Faculties and Divisions must identify if vibration is a significant risk to those under their control by:

- Speaking with staff, students and others about which, if any, processes involve regular exposure to vibration e.g. using powered hand tools.
- Checking for warnings of vibration in the manual for, or on the casing of, such powered hand tools.
- Asking those under the Faculty/Division's control if they experience any HAVS symptoms and whether the equipment they use produces high levels of vibration or uncomfortable strains on hands and arms.

Table 1: Vibration Exposure Action and Limit Values		
Hand Arm Vibration		
Daily Exposure Action Value (EAV)	2.5 m/s ² A(8)	Above the EAV, a vibration risk assessment must be carried out so that action can be taken to reduce daily vibration exposure.
Daily Exposure Limit Value (ELV)	5.0 m/s ² A(8)	This level of exposure to an individual must not be exceeded on any day.
Whole Body Vibration		
Daily Exposure Action Value (EAV)	0.5 m/s ² A(8)	At this level, technical and organisational measures must be put in place to reduce exposure.
Daily Exposure Limit Value (ELV)	1.15 m/s ² A(8)	This level of exposure to an individual must not be exceeded on any day.

If there is likely to be a vibration risk, those at risk must be identified and an assessment made to what degree i.e. are vibration exposures likely to be above the EAV or ELV (Table 1).

The activities that will need to be controlled must also be clearly identified. They must be grouped into high risk (above the ELV), medium risk (above the EAV) and low risk (below the EAV).

Faculties and Divisions must create an action plan as part of their risk assessment, placing priority on the higher risk activities.

An exposure estimate must also be included in the risk assessment. This can be estimated by using the [HSE HAVS vibration exposure calculator](#). This is particularly important where people may be subject to combined exposure e.g. where an individual uses multiple tools in a day with varying vibration emissions.

5.1.3 Whole-Body Vibration

Faculties and Divisions must identify activities that may cause WBVS for staff and others under their control, such as driving vehicles on rough terrain where significant bumps and jolts may be caused.

Discussions must also be had with staff to identify if anyone is experiencing symptoms of WBVS.

Where WBVS is identified to be a significant risk, a vibration risk assessment must be undertaken to ensure that workers are not exposed to levels above the WBVS ELV (Table 1). Faculties and Divisions may follow the same risk assessment process detailed in the section above (5.1.2).

5.1.4 Approvals

The vibration risk assessment needs to be approved. Where competence to carry out the assessment exists within the University community, once complete, the risk assessment must be presented at the Faculty Health and Safety Committee or Campus Operational

Safety Group prior to it being signed off by the relevant Executive Dean of Faculty or Director of Professional Services. Anyone who is required to follow the risk assessment must also sign it to confirm that they have read, understood and agree to follow it.

Where a vibration risk assessment needs to be carried out by an external consultant, Faculties and Divisions must carry out due diligence checks prior to procuring their services, for example, through receiving references from other organisations who have used them, checking registrations, and initial meetings to confirm their understanding of how a vibration risk assessment is conducted.

Where a vibration risk assessment is carried out by an external consultant, it must be presented at the relevant Faculty Health and Safety Committee or Campus Operational Safety Group prior to it being accepted by the relevant Executive Dean of Faculty or Director of Professional Services. The assessment must also be shared with anyone who is required to follow it, and Faculties and Divisions must keep a record to demonstrate that those needing to follow the assessment have read, understood and agree to follow it.

5.2 Physical Controls

From the outcomes of the vibration risk assessment, and where vibration cannot be eliminated, Faculties and Divisions must put measures in place to reduce vibration to as low as reasonably practicable. Where vibration exposure meets or exceeds the EAV, Faculties and Divisions must establish and implement a documented programme of technical and organisational vibration control measures, with defined responsibilities, priorities, and timescales, and must review its effectiveness periodically.

Vibration control measures must be selected in accordance with the general principles of prevention i.e. prioritising control at source.

Faculties and Divisions must ensure that the effectiveness of vibration control measures is verified, for example through periodic inspection, observation of working practices, or repeat vibration assessments where appropriate.

5.2.1 Facilities

Workstation design

When designing or re-designing new workstation areas and layouts, there must be a focus on minimising loads on staff hands, wrists and arms which may be caused by poor posture. There must also be the introduction, so far as reasonably practicable, of jigs and suspension systems to reduce the need for staff to grip heavy tools tightly. For example, suspending equipment from a counterbalance system to reduce the load on the operator's arms and the tightness of grip needed. The provision of heated rest areas must also be considered.

Improvement of ground surfaces

Ensure that floor and ground surfaces are as smooth as possible e.g. by filling in potholes, to reduce the risk of WBVS.

Acoustic and vibration insulating materials

Use of materials to absorb and reduce vibration levels.

Equipment installation

Ensure that vibrating equipment is not fitted to walls and other supporting structures which may increase the level of vibration through work areas.

5.2.2 Equipment

Equipment selection

Faculties and Divisions must make sure that equipment selected or allocated for tasks is suitable and can do the work efficiently. Equipment that is unsuitable, too small or not powerful enough is likely to take much longer to complete a task and will expose employees to vibration for longer than necessary.

Other control measures to eliminate or reduce vibration include selecting low-vibration tools and equipment at the procurement stage (e.g. tools with lower declared vibration emission values), replacing high-vibration processes or tools with alternative methods (e.g. hydraulic splitting instead of percussive breaking), and using automated or remote-controlled equipment to remove operator exposure.

Additionally, the use of engineering controls at source such as fitting vibration-damping materials or components (e.g. anti-vibration mounts, isolators, dampers) can reduce exposure to vibration.

5.3 Management Controls

5.3.1 Work schedules

The amount of time staff and others under the control of the Faculty or Division are exposed to vibration must be reduced as far as possible to reduce exposure to as low as reasonably practicable. For example, staff and others could be rotated on different activities, mixing these up so that people are exposed to vibration for short periods of time rather than prolonged sessions. Faculties and Divisions must use the HSE Vibration Calculator to ensure those under their control are not exposed to excessive levels of vibration above the EAVs and ELVs.

5.3.2 Equipment purchasing policy

Faculties and Divisions must adopt an equipment purchasing policy whereby old equipment is replaced, so far as reasonably practicable, with lower vibration emission replacements. This must also include the need to discuss equipment requirements with suppliers and comparing vibration emissions between brands. Staff must also be given the opportunity to trial new equipment to consider their opinion and the policy must cover regular maintenance and inspection to ensure equipment vibration emissions do not increase over time due to poor maintenance.

5.3.3 Maintenance and inspection

Maintenance programmes must be introduced to ensure equipment is working effectively and therefore preventing avoidable increases in vibration as it ages. For example, by regularly replacing consumables such as grinding wheels. Manufacturer's recommendations on maintenance must be followed where appropriate.

5.3.4 Health surveillance

Faculties and Divisions must provide health surveillance for staff who are regularly exposed to vibration levels at or above the EAV or who may be otherwise at risk of developing vibration-related health conditions. Its purpose is to identify staff who may be particularly vulnerable, detect early symptoms of HAVS, WBVS or related illnesses, prevent progression to long-term disability, support staff in remaining at work, and monitor the effectiveness of existing vibration control measures. Faculties and Divisions must consult staff and their safety representatives before introducing a health surveillance programme so that everyone understands that its purpose is preventative and protective.

Faculties and Divisions must carry out health surveillance themselves using regular questionnaires designed to identify early symptoms. Where staff identify issues or symptoms relating to vibration exposure they must be referred to the University's Occupational Health provider.

Health surveillance records must be maintained, and staff must be provided access to their records. Any recommendations from Occupational Health must be acted upon, which may include the review of vibration risk assessments. Any confirmed cases of HAVS, CTS or WBVS must be reported on the University's incident reporting system (section 6.3).

5.3.5 Information, instruction, training and supervision

Faculties and Divisions must provide the following to those under their control who may be exposed to vibration:

- The health effects of HAVS, WBVS and CTS.
- The sources of HAVS, WBVS and CTS, such as equipment that produces vibration.
- Whether they are at risk i.e. high risk (above the ELV), medium (above the EAV) or low risk.
- The risk factors, including the levels of vibration, daily exposure, and regularity of exposure over weeks, months and years.
- How to recognise symptoms of HAVS, WBVS and CTS, and how to report these.
- Information on health surveillance and the preventative and protective purpose of it.
- The measures in place to reduce risk i.e. changes to working practices, using correct equipment for the job, use correct techniques such as loose grip and the benefits of maintaining good blood circulation in the hands and fingers.

Faculties and Divisions must ensure that those under their control are monitored at regular intervals to ensure that control measures continue to be followed.

5.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

There is limited evidence to suggest that PPE such as anti-vibration gloves are an effective control against vibration from hand tools. Anti-vibration gloves must not be relied upon as the primary control measure for reducing vibration exposure. Control measures must instead prioritise elimination, substitution, engineering controls and management controls.

It is preferable to provide suitable warm gloves for those who may be required to use vibration creating equipment in cold environments. This ensures that circulation is maintained in the hands and fingers, reducing the effects of vibration exposure.

Any PPE provided must be:

- Suitable for the task, individual and environment.
- Compatible with other PPE requirements.
- Properly maintained, stored and replaced if damaged or worn.
- Accompanied by appropriate instruction and training in its use.

Faculties and Divisions must ensure that the use of gloves does not increase grip force requirements or create additional safety risks when operating equipment.

6. Emergency Arrangements

6.1 Emergency Planning & Preparation

Faculties and Divisions must take reasonable steps to identify foreseeable vibration related emergency scenarios. This includes situations such as the failure of equipment increasing its vibration magnitude, failure of vibration exposure control measures or abnormal operating conditions. Vibration risks associated with emergencies must be considered as part of activity specific risk assessments, particularly in higher risk areas such as workshops, plant rooms, and construction or maintenance activities.

Clear roles and responsibilities must be defined, staff and students informed and trained to recognise and respond to such events, and arrangements put in place to ensure effective communication and reliable maintenance of vibration exposure control measures. These arrangements must be fully integrated with wider University emergency procedures and kept under regular review, particularly following incidents, near misses or changes to activities, equipment or facilities.

6.2 Emergency Response & First Aid

Vibration-related incidents can arise from sudden or unexpected failures of equipment and failure of vibration exposure controls. Prompt action is required where individuals report symptoms such as tingling or numbness in the fingers, hands and/or arms, visible loss of circulation in the hands (white finger) or back pain potentially associated with vibration exposure.

The priority in any such event is to rapidly reduce or stop exposure by stopping work (where safe to do so), isolating the vibration source, or removing people from the affected area. Where access is unexpectedly required to make the situation safe, consideration must be given to other means of action, such as isolating the power from vibration causing equipment where it is safe to do so.

There is no specific first-aid treatment for HAVS, WBVS and CTS, but anyone experiencing symptoms must be removed from further exposure, reassured and monitored. Persistent or severe symptoms must be escalated promptly for medical advice, including referral to Occupational Health or a GP. Outcomes of such assessments must be used to review and, where necessary, revise vibration risk assessments and control measures.

6.3 Reporting Incidents & Accidents

Faculties and Divisions must ensure that any incidents, accidents and near misses in relation to the control of vibration are reported on the University's incident reporting system. Any diagnosed cases of HAVS and CTS, must also be reported on the incident reporting system so that these can be reported by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team to the HSE under RIDDOR.

Faculties and Divisions must ensure that when an incident, accident, near miss or ill health occurs, this is followed up with those concerned to make sure they are recovering and if anything can be done to prevent or reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

Where the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team may need to carry out an investigation, Faculties and Divisions must support this process.

7. Transport

Where people are required to use work related transport as part of their role, research or education, there is a significant risk of vibration exposure, and it is under the control of the University, this must also be considered as part of the vibration risk assessment.

8. Monitoring & Assurance

Faculties and Divisions must implement local arrangements for ensuring that control measures from vibration risk assessments are implemented and followed.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team will monitor the implementation of this SCoP through inspection, audit and the review of reported incidents.

9. Records & Retention Requirements

Vibration risk assessments must be retained for 5 years once they have been superseded by an updated version.

Any formal procedures relating to vibration at work, must be retained for 10 years once superseded by an updated version.

Inspection records and audits relating to vibration at work must be retained for 10 years following completion of any actions that were identified.

10. Further Information / Guidance

- [HSE Vibration at Work webpage](#)
- [HAVS Vibration Exposure Calculator](#)
- [HSE Hand Arm Vibration](#)
- [HSE Whole Body Vibration](#)
- [HSE Control back pain risks from whole body vibration \(INDG242\)](#)

11. Legislation & Standards

- [The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005](#)

12. References

- [UoS Machinery webpage](#)

13. Appendices

This section is not relevant to the scope of this document.

14. Document Control

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