

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE EU DIRECTIVE ON VIBRATION EXPOSURE

The Directive of 25 June 2002 of the European Parliament and the Council of the European union, on the minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (vibration) (sixteenth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC)

It is considered necessary to introduce measures protecting workers from the risks arising from vibrations owing to their effects on the health and safety of workers, in particular muscular/bone structure, neurological and vascular disorders.

Whole-body vibration' shall mean: the mechanical vibration that, when transmitted to the whole body, entails risks to the health and safety of workers, in particular lower-back morbidity and trauma of the spine.

The level of exposure to vibration can be more effectively reduced by incorporating preventive measures into the design of work stations and places of work and by selecting work equipment, procedures and methods so as to give priority to reducing the risks at source. Provisions relating to work equipment and methods thus contribute to the protection of the workers involved.

Employers should make adjustments in the light of technical progress and scientific knowledge regarding risks related to exposure to vibration, with a view to improving the safety and health protection of workers.

In the case of sea and air transport, given the current state of the art it is not possible to comply in all circumstances with the exposure limit values for whole-body vibration; provision should therefore be made for duly justified exemptions in some cases.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Exposure limit values and action values for whole-body vibration:

- (a) the daily exposure limit value standardised to an eight-hour reference period shall be 1,15 m/s² or, at the choice of the Member State concerned, a vibration dose value of 21 m/s^{1,75};
- (b) the daily exposure action value standardised to an eight hour reference period shall be 0,5 m/s² or, at the choice of the Member State concerned, a vibration dose value of 9,1 m/s^{1,75}.

OBLIGATION OF EMPLOYERS

Determination and assessment of risks

The employer shall assess and, if necessary, measure the levels of mechanical vibration to which workers are exposed.

The employer shall give particular attention, when carrying out the risk assessment, to the following:

- (a) the level, type and duration of exposure, including any exposure to intermittent vibration or repeated shocks;
- (b) the exposure limit values and the exposure action values laid down in Article 3 of this Directive;
- (c) any effects concerning the health and safety of workers at particularly sensitive risk;
- (d) any indirect effects on worker safety resulting from interactions between mechanical vibration and the workplace or other work equipment;

- (e) information provided by the manufacturers of work equipment in accordance with the relevant Community Directives;
- (f) the existence of replacement equipment designed to reduce the levels of exposure to mechanical vibration;

Provisions to avoid or reduce exposure: Taking account of technical progress and of the availability of measures to control the risk at source, the risks arising from exposure to mechanical vibration shall be eliminated at their source or reduced to a minimum.

Once the exposure action values are exceeded, the employer shall establish and implement a program of technical and/or organisational measures to reduce to a minimum exposure to mechanical vibration and the attendant risks, taking into account in particular:

- (a) other working methods that require less exposure to mechanical vibration;
- (b) the choice of appropriate work equipment of appropriate ergonomic design and, taking account of the work to be done, producing the least possible vibration;
- (c) the provision of auxiliary equipment that reduces the risk of injuries caused by vibration, such as seats that effectively reduce whole-body vibration and handles which reduce the vibration transmitted to the hand-arm system;
- (d) appropriate maintenance programs for work equipment, the workplace and workplace systems;
- (e) the design and layout of workplaces and work stations;
- (f) adequate information and training to instruct workers to use work equipment correctly and safely in order to reduce their exposure to mechanical vibration to a minimum;

- (g) limitation of the duration and intensity of the exposure;

In any event, workers shall not be exposed above the exposure limit value.

If, despite the measures taken by the employer to comply with this Directive, the exposure limit value is exceeded, the employer shall take immediate action to reduce exposure below the exposure limit value. He shall identify the reasons why the exposure limit value has been exceeded, and shall amend the protection and prevention measures accordingly in order to prevent it being exceeded again.

Derogations

In the case of sea and air transport, given the current state of the art it is not possible to comply in all circumstances with the exposure limit values for whole-body vibration; provision should therefore be made for duly justified exemptions in some cases.

In compliance with the general principles of health and safety protection for workers, Member States may, in the case of sea and air transport, derogate from Article 5(3) in duly justified circumstances with respect to whole-body vibration where, given the state of the art and the specific characteristics of workplaces, it is not possible to comply with the exposure limit value despite the technical and/or organisation measures taken.

The derogations must be accompanied by conditions, which guarantee, taking into account the special circumstances, that the resulting risks are reduced to a minimum and that the workers concerned are subject to increased health surveillance.

For full text version:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/l_177/l_17720020706en00130019.pdf