

## HAVS Awareness Training

### What is HAVS?

**Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)** is a preventable medical condition caused by regular and prolonged exposure to hand-arm vibration. This vibration is typically transmitted through power tools and machinery such as breakers, grinders, and drills.

### What are the symptoms?

HAVS affects blood vessels, nerves, and joints in the hands and arms, and symptoms can include:

- Tingling and numbness in the fingers
- Loss of sensation
- Reduced grip strength
- Fingers turning white (especially in cold conditions) – known as **vibration white finger**
- Pain and discomfort in the hands or arms

If left unmanaged, HAVS can become **permanent and disabling**.

### What causes HAVS?

Regular use of vibrating tools, especially over long periods, can damage the nerves and blood vessels in the hand and arm. The risk increases with:

- Longer exposure times
- Higher vibration levels
- Lack of breaks or poor technique

### Smoking

- Nicotine constricts blood vessels, reducing circulation—this can worsen symptoms like vibration white finger.
- Smokers are at higher risk of HAVS progressing more quickly and becoming more severe.

### Poor Diet

- Deficiencies in certain vitamins (e.g., B12) can affect nerve health.
- High-fat, high-sugar diets may contribute to poor circulation.

### Cold Exposure Without Protection

- HAVS symptoms like white finger are triggered or worsened by cold.
- Not wearing gloves or keeping hands warm can increase the frequency and severity of attacks.

## Alcohol Consumption

Excessive alcohol intake can impair nerve health and affect circulation, worsening HAVS symptoms.

## Underlying Medical Conditions

- Conditions like **diabetes**, **Raynaud's disease**, or **carpal tunnel syndrome** can mimic or aggravate HAVS.

## Bardic Exposure Limit Guidelines

Plant	Manufacturers Guidance	Bardic Allowed Exposure Limit
Hydraulic Breaker (only JCB allowed)	Permissible daily exposure allowed is 8 hrs	3 hrs max daily exposure with breaks every 15 mins
Cut-Off Saw	3hrs 40 minutes	30 mins max daily exposure
Compactor Plate	2 hrs 30 minutes	30 mins max daily exposure
Trench Rammer	2 hrs 8 minutes	30 mins max daily exposure
Drills (SDS)	52 mins	15 mins max daily exposure
Core Drills	Seek advice prior to using	
Hand held demolition breakers	Seek advice prior to using	

## Bardic Construction Management Measures

- Hire low vibration well maintained modern tools that have low vibration levels
- Staff always work in pairs so that breaks and rotation can be take place
- Ensure the use of larger plant machinery is used whenever possible e.g. excavator and hammer rather than hand held breakers
- Provide each vehicle with anti-vibration gloves
- Include guidance as to exposure limits in RAMS
- Provide guidance as to exposure limits on website