

## Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULD): Management Briefing

**The Health and Safety Executive's definition of Work Related Upper Limb Disorder (WRULD) is:**

'ULDs are conditions which affect the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves or other soft tissues and joints in the upper limbs such as the neck, shoulders, arms, wrists, hands and fingers. 'Upper limb disorders' is a general label which is used to refer to a range of medical conditions which can be caused or made worse by work' (Upper Limb Disorders in the Workplace – HSG 60).

**The key risk factors causing WRULD are:**

- repetitive movements without rest
- work involving deviated wrist movements
- poorly designed workplace/workstation layouts
- awkward or unusual movements
- working when cold and or stressed/tense
- using excessive muscular force
- manual handling particularly if it involves overreaching/stretching
- work with vibrating tools, particularly if poorly maintained.

**Recommendations for employers:**

- analyse the work processes and assess the risks to workers from WRULD. Decide how significant the risks are, introduce appropriate control measures and develop a clear management plan for prevention, control, monitoring and review
- ensure a specific vibration risk assessment is undertaken for any work involving exposure to vibration
- consult the workforce and safety representatives about the risk assessments and the proposed control measures
- ensure all workers are aware of the organisation's policy regarding WRULD including their own responsibilities
- where relevant, put in place appropriate health surveillance
- ensure workers are competent to do their job and are trained to understand and recognise the symptoms of WRULD and how they might occur and fully understand the control measures put in place to protect them.

### Case Law

2005 – Legal Secretary – successful claim for £121,803.

A display screen equipment (DSE) assessment had been carried out which had noted the claimant was on medication for her wrists. However, more work was given to the claimant during a colleague's maternity leave, which exacerbated her condition. It was ruled that the worsening of the condition was reasonably foreseeable.

The claim was successful in relation to a breach of statutory duty under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations for failing to carry out a suitable and sufficient analysis of her workstation and assess the health and safety risks (Reg 2(1)), for failing to reduce the risk to as low as is reasonably practicable (Reg 2(3)), for failing to plan the work to allow for breaks and interruptions (Reg 4) and for failing to provide adequate training in the use of her workstation (Reg 6).

## Control methods or risk reduction techniques must be used to:

- provide a clear statement to workers that the risk of WRULD is taken seriously at all levels of the organization
- provide information on policy including implementation
- properly understand what is involved in all areas of operation in order to implement appropriate and effective controls
- monitor the control measures and review to ensure ongoing effectiveness
- ensure all workers are aware of the risks of WRULD and the likely effects and the control measures which should be applied
- provide information on the legal framework surrounding WRULD and the employer/employees duties under them
- provide support following symptoms or diagnosis.

## Legal duties

The main areas of health and safety law relevant to WRULD are:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended)
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005.

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