Ask the Expert: Exposure Limits on Vibrating Equipment

Question: Are there exposure limits or time guidelines for using high vibrating tools such as impact wrenches, chainsaws, jackhammers, and riveting hammers?

Answer: Generally, when using these types of vibrating tools, it is recommended to limit exposure to 30 minutes a day.

These exposure guidelines however, don’t come in the form of a specific regulatory standard but are based on consensus standards.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH®), and the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) have developed standards and threshold limit values (TLVs®), which are health-based recommended maximum exposure levels.

The ISO standard deals with whole body vibration only, while ACGIH® and CEN provide limits for both hand/arm and whole-body vibration.

So, while OSHA and most Canadian jurisdictions may not have a specific standard dealing with this issue and the ACGIH isn’t an enforcement agency – an employer could still be cited under the General Duty Clause or for lack of due diligence.