Wood Dust Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Wood dust exposure is highest amongst woodworking machine operators, cabinet makers, furniture finishers, carpenters and workers employed in the manufacture of wood products. You may be exposed to wood dust and formaldehyde if your work involves cutting, sawing, routing, turning, sanding, or milling wood or pressed wood products.
2. The risk of lung cancer related to wood dust exposure was around 40 percent higher than for those not exposed to the dust. The most common occupations linked with exposure were construction work, timber, and furniture making. Substantial exposure over a lengthy period of time was necessary to increase cancer risk, and there was little risk among those whose cumulative exposure was not substantial.
3. Excesses of other cancers, including lung and stomach, have been reported among persons employed in wood industries or occupationally exposed to wood dust.
4. Using machines to cut, smooth or shape wood materials can expose workers to wood dust.
5. Using machinery to manipulate wood results in the greatest exposure, such as chipping, sanding, drilling, and shaping.
6. Many of the materials used throughout the construction industry contain quartz, due to the serious health issues caused by exposure to these dust particles, EU member states have developed exposure limits for different types of dust and laws to protect the operator.
7. Inhalable dust: This is airborne particles that are breathed into the airways and deposited in the respiratory tract. These particles are usually cleared by mucus.
8. Respirable dust: This refers to the finer particles that penetrate deep in to the lungs. Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) can cause scar tissue of the lung which in turn leads to silicosis

STATS

- In 2010, it was reported that 14% of workers (i.e. machinery operators, drivers, technicians, trades workers, laborers) were exposed to wood and related dust, and 13% were exposed to industrial and medical cases and fumes (formaldehyde included).
- According to WorkSafe, said diseases associated with wood dust and welding fumes included cancers, asthma and chronic lung conditions, while carbon monoxide could be deadly.
- At the current time, it’s thought that occupational exposures to chemicals and other substances are responsible for up to 27% of lung cancers in men.
- A different 2015 review of 10 studies which looked directly at wood dust exposure and lung cancer found a significantly increased risk of lung cancer with wood dust exposure; those who were exposed to wood dust were at least 20 percent more likely to develop the disease, and those who worked in wood dust-associated occupations had a 15% greater risk.