STOP & THINK

Week 12 – Hand Arm Vibration (HAV)

Earlier this week I was watching young workers breaking up a couple of large concrete blocks (approx 1m x 1m x 1m founded at ground level). They were using what appeared to be a very blunt jack-hammer. Putting to one side the distinct lack of PPE (no eye protection, no gloves, no foot protection, no ear protection etc .) what made me stop and think was "why?".

Why are two workers stood 1m off the ground on their respective blocks of concrete, balancing in a pair of sandals on a small flat surface as they break the surrounding concrete away? Ok, I'm in India and to be fair working practices do vary from that in the UK, however, fundamental questions were raised. Why wasn't an excavator with a breaker attachment being used? Why don't these young guys know the risk and the damage that is being caused to their body? Why don't they know about 'vibration white finger'? What made this particularly hard to stomach was that the work was being undertaken for a hospital in the hospital grounds!

"What's the issue?" some may ask. Some employees who use hand held tools and machines that produce certain levels of vibration can suffer injury to their hand or arm. The most common result of this is damage to the blood vessels which is also known as 'vibration white finger'. The following provide a great insight into a big issue.

For further information:

B&V iNet (PROSYS)

B&V toolbox talk sheet and presentation highlighting hazards, H&S measures, thought provoking questions & effects on health

http://bveuwaterweb/documents/QADOC/Prosys/A/GA431B.htm

One Safety Hub

Good presentation from MGJV on the subject with ideas for minimising risks

http://www.onesafetyhub.co.uk/Partners/Mgjv/Lists/OSHLibrary/Forms/DispForm.aspx?ID=5

HSE

The HSE has a whole section dedicated to the subject (http://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/campaign/construction.htm) / http://www.hse.gov.uk/vibration/hav/publications.htm. Tells you something immediately! Of particular use are two key tables:

- Table 1: Alternative processes to avoid/reduce use of vibrating equipment (this table identifies alternative methods for specified high risk activities or processes; and links to further information and case studies)
- Table 2: Management of HAV risks where use of vibrating equipment is unavoidable

A question or two to get you thinking!

As designers, does this really affect us ?
How can I make a difference ?

BLACK & VEATCH
Building a world of difference.