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SLEEPY TRUCKIE?

HERE'S A NOISE TO PERK YOU UP!

Driving a truck can be a long, tedious job. The monotonous hum of the engine, the straight road, the long driving shift — all contribute to lapsed concentration, poor alertness, and greater risk of accidents.

Now, the Swedish National Institute of Occupational Health, in conjunction with the truck manufacturer SAAB-Scania, have developed a new product designed to keep the driver awake and alert during long hauls.

The product is a result of research into the way sounds of various frequencies affect the brain's alertness. The research has been conducted by the Umeå branch of the SNIOSH, headed by professor Ulf Landström.

The unit, named Scania Alert, uses a sound generator and a micro-processor and is housed in a black box in the truck. The unit is hooked up to a switch and a loudspeaker near the driver's head.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

When switched on, the Scania Alert unit breaks into the normal car radio or tape recorder and emits four 85 dB tone signals in random sequence every so often. It is up to the truck driver to turn the unit on whenever he or she starts to feel tired.

The system is backed by extensive research into the way the brain works. Professional truck drivers were subjected to recorded engine noise

for extended periods. A computer was programmed to recognise the brain wave patterns that signified a decrease in alertness. When this happened, the computer emitted a brief tone sequence over the loudspeaker. Through extensive testing, the most "awakening" tone combination was established: four different tones around 1000 Hz. At the driver's seat, the four-tone signals are repeated at random intervals up to 5 minutes apart, in differing sequence, and of varying duration.

The research project had a success rate of more than 80 per cent, making the driver feel more awake. Tests were conducted over two months, using professional truck drivers. The drivers generally chose to have the unit switched on about a third of their driving shifts. They did not consider the random noises distracting.



Source: Tillhammar P., 1995, *Forskning Pågående*, No 3, p 1



WORSE THAN A PAPER CUT

ALLERGY FROM PAPERWORK

Colophony is a common ingredient in paper. It is also a well-known allergen, capable of causing contact allergies in people who work with paper and paper products. And it is not paper mill workers who are at risk, but office workers who handle large amounts of paper in their working day.

Colophony is also known as rosin. It comes from living evergreens such as pine, used in the manufacture of paper. Colophony allergy was discovered as early as 1920, when the rosin was used as an adhesive in bandages and dressings, resulting in patients developing allergic reactions.

Nowadays, acrylates are often used instead, but some bandage products still contain colophony, because it sticks better to the skin.



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ONE OF THE TOP TEN

Colophony is right up in the top ten on the list of common contact allergens, along with nickel, cobalt, chromate and thiurams (rubber chemicals). Very large amounts of colophony are used every year in a wide array of products, spanning from cutting fluids and paints to the rosin used by ballet dancers and violinists. The American market features around 300 products that contain colophony, such as the following:

- Soldering flux
- Paint
- Lacquer
- Glue
- Rust protection
- Cutting fluids
- Paper
- Dentures
- Bandages
- Wart ointments
- Liniment
- Mascara
- Rouge
- Tar soap
- Floor rosin
- Cleaning soap
- Polish
- Violin bow rosin
- Chewing gum
- Labels
- Insulating tape
- Herbal ointments

COLOPHONY

PAPER

MANUFACTURE

Colophony serves an important function in paper. It is the ingredient that makes it possible to write and print on the paper. It also makes it harder for the paper to absorb water.

Traditional papermaking methods (chemical pulp) use less colophony than modern mechanical pulp techniques. However, colophony is essential if the paper is to be used as writing paper. The reason for the difference in colophony

content is that the chemical pulp method separates the rosin from the pulp, whereas the mechanical pulp method does not. Writing paper is usually made from chemical pulp, while mechanical pulp is particularly useful for newsprint quality paper.

It's handling paper, not making it

Contact allergy from colophony is more of a risk among office workers who handle large amounts of paper daily. The risk is not so great for workers in the paper manufacturing industry.

It is not the paper itself that is the root cause of contact allergy; dermatologists believe that people who react have probably been sensitised to colophony through some other avenue.

People with colophony allergy can develop reactions from a variety of paper products, such as self-copying paper, writing paper, printing paper, newsprint and computer paper.

Unfortunately, there is not much people with colophony-induced hand eczema can do apart from wearing cotton gloves when handling paper products. Some people who had skin problems have actually been able to overcome the conditions by avoiding direct contact with paper for a period of six months or so.

Dermatologists should note this when recommending sick leave for people with paper allergy:

during the period off work, there is more time for reading newspapers and books, and the use of cotton gloves should be diligent.

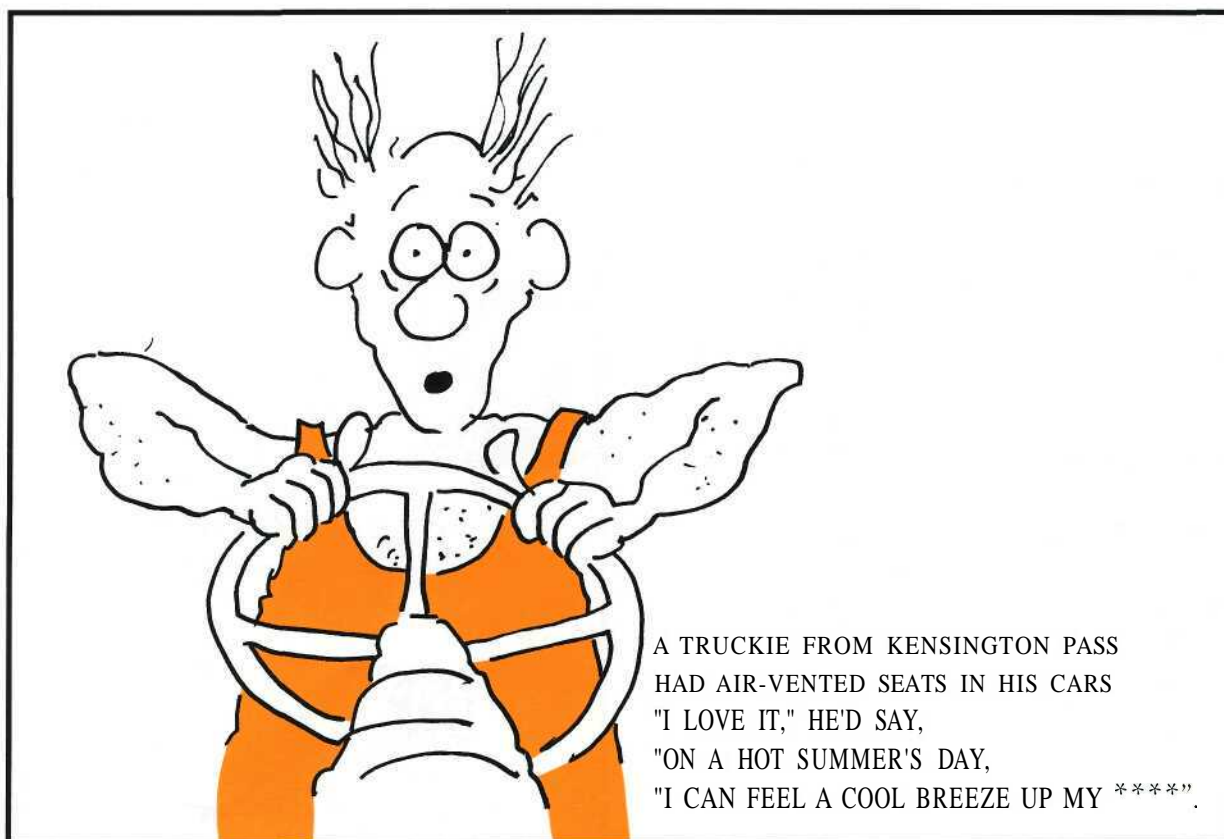
COLOPHONY IN OTHER CONTEXTS

When computer terminal workers started to have skin complaints, the focus was always on the video display. However, in many cases the culprit had nothing to do with computer screens: it was colophony contained in the mascara, lipstick, rouge and other make-up used by the office workers. It may seem strange, but colophony, a well-known skin allergen, is extensively used in cosmetics. Even the most exclusive and expensive beauty products have been found to contain colophony. Nickel and cobalt, two other skin allergens, are also used.

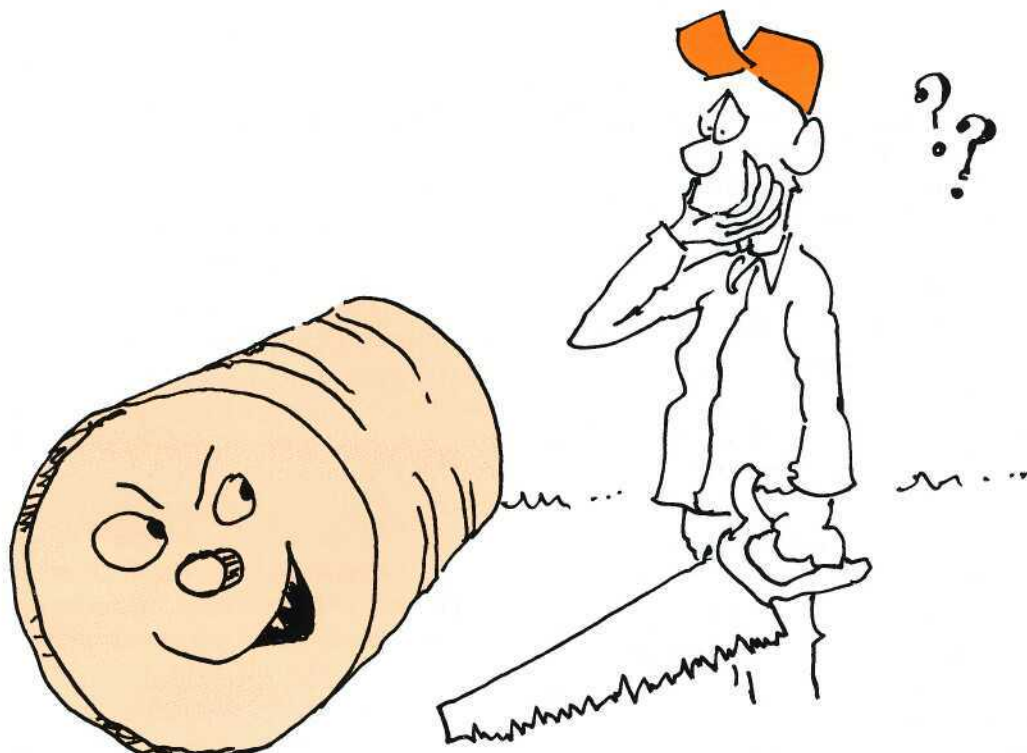
It may also seem strange that several of these high-status brands of cosmetics are advertised as "allergy-tested", and yet contain some of the top-ten allergens.



Source: Karlberg A-T, Liden C. 1992: Colophony (rosin) in newspaper may contribute to hand eczema, *British Journal of Dermatology*, No 126, pp 161-165; Karlberg A-T, Liden C., Ehrin E., 1991: Colophony in mascara as a cause of eyelid dermatitis, *Acta Derm Venereol.*, No 71, pp 445-447, as reported in *Research for a better working environment*, Sweden's National Institute of Occupational Health, Solna, Sweden, publ, No.23,1992



A TRUCKIE FROM KENSINGTON PASS
HAD AIR-VENTED SEATS IN HIS CARS
"I LOVE IT," HE'D SAY,
"ON A HOT SUMMER'S DAY,
"I CAN FEEL A COOL BREEZE UP MY ****".



PLAYING THE DRUMS

There are many uses for old drums — not just if you're a member of a steel band. But there may be danger booming inside the empties...

Empty steel drums that have previously contained flammable materials can constitute an explosion or fire hazard many years after being emptied. Grinding, cutting or welding drums may end in disaster if appropriate precautions aren't taken.

Usually, sparks or heat from the cutting tool causes the explosion — but it doesn't have to happen immediately as you cut into the drum: the very act of opening a cut in the drum may allow air to seep in slowly, gradually creating an explosive mix with the chemical inside. Therefore, you might spend several minutes cutting the drum before the air/fuel mixture becomes explosive.

ACTION PLAN

- Remove all possible sources of ignition from the area (flames, mechanical sparks, electrical sparks, etc)
- Remove all flammable substances and combustible materials from the area
- Remove all caps and stoppers from the drum
- Purge the drum (see below)
- Wear protective clothing when cutting (spectacles, gloves, overalls)

- If using an electric power tool to cut the drum, make sure the drum is completely drained and dry before starting.

Purging methods

Drums can be purged of gas by one of three methods:

- Fill the drum completely with water (but remember that water may not remove all residues and solids)
- Fill the drum with an inert gas such as nitrogen
- Purge the drum with steam



Source: WorkCover New South Wales 1993, Explosion danger in cutting empty fuel drums, Safety Alert SA93/4



ALLERGY CLEAN-UP

The Swedish Asthma and Allergy Association have presented a cleaning roster to minimise allergies in the workplace:

DAILY:

- Mop floors

WEEKLY:

- Wet and wipe floors dry
- Wet and wipe down desks, tables, window sills, shelves etc.

MONTHLY:

- Wet and wipe dry panels, skirtings, radiators, vents, grilles, joints, architraves and other dust-collecting objects

YEARLY:

- Perform a thorough annual cleaning
- Wash all curtains
- Clean light fixtures, lamp shades, air in- and outlets etc.
- Clean and treat floors and linoleum carpets with wax or otherwise to withstand mopping and wet & dry wiping

The Asthma and Allergy Association warns against using only dry cleaning methods in the workplace. Dry sweeping and vacuum cleaning cause dust to rise and linger in the air. Central vacuum cleaners are a better option. Still the association promotes wet mopping of the floors. However, it is important not to use too much water, and to wipe the floors dry after mopping.

Dry methods have become increasingly popular, and these days, about 80 per cent of all cleaning is done by using dry methods. The little wet cleaning that is done is mainly performed in wet areas, such as bathrooms, toilets, laundries and so on.

The obvious advantage of the dry method is that less chemicals are used, and the cleaners won't have to handle heavy soaked mops.

However, some dirt and dust cannot be removed by dry methods only, and wet cleaning should be applied to some extent.



Source: Patmalnieks A., 1995, *Arbetsmiljö*, No 10,

ARE YOU IN THE HOT SEAT?

DRIVERS FIND VENTILATED SEATS REALLY COOL

Sitting in the driver's seat for a full shift every day places a lot of demands on the seat itself. Not only should it be ergonomically designed for the muscles and joints in the neck, spine, lower back, and legs — it should also be designed for general well-being. That includes the climate in the driver's compartment.

A new type of driver's seat offers in-built reverse-cycle ventilation, giving the driver full control of cool air, warm air and fresh air.

The seats have been a success in Europe, particularly for their capabilities of keeping the driver cool in summer, but also for warming up the body in winter. The seat allows parts of the body to keep cool that ordinary air conditioning can't, typically the lower back, buttocks and underside of the thighs.




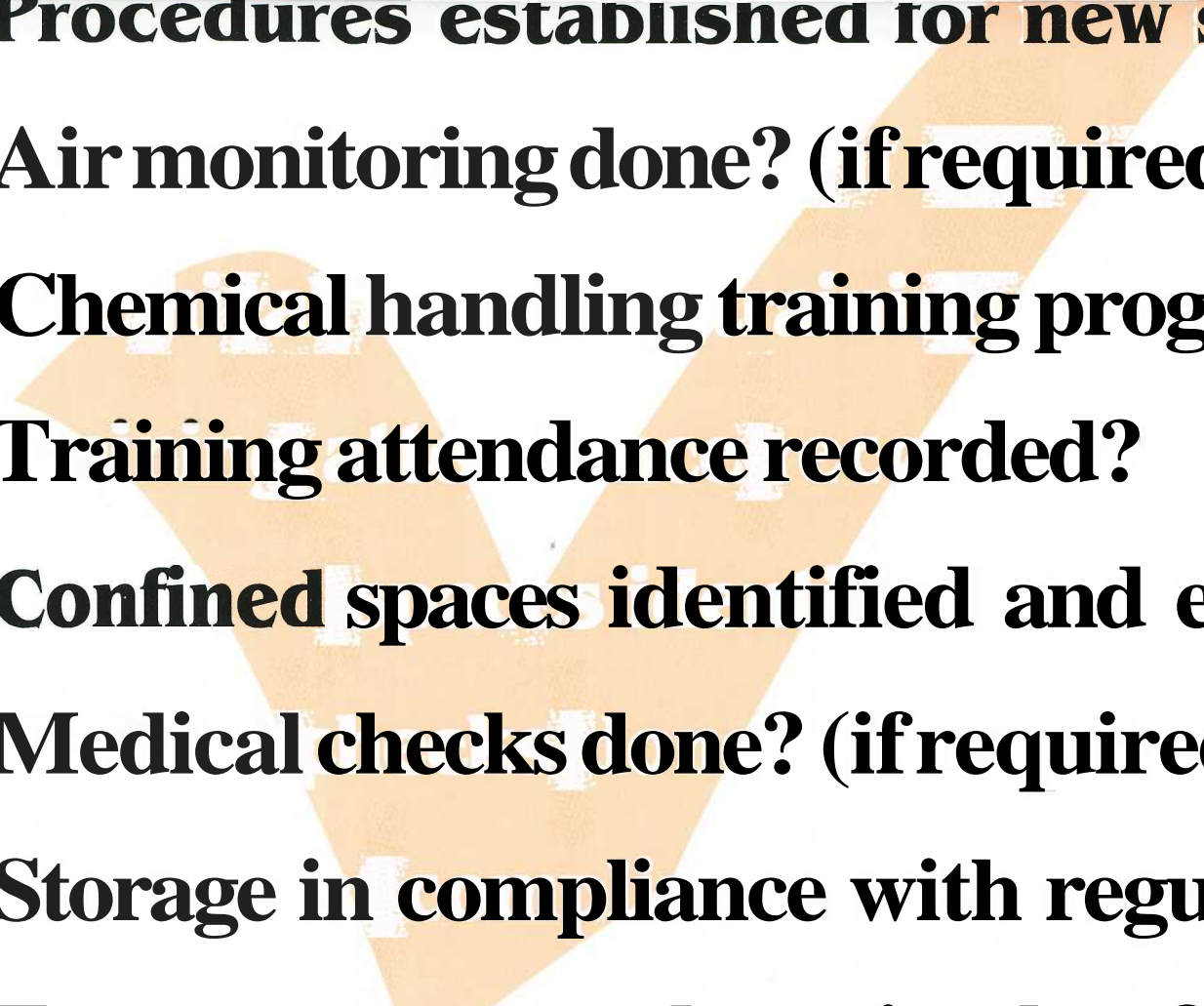
Source: Leverbeck K., 1996, *Forskning Pågår*, No 2, p 3, ref: Holmér I., Wikström B-O., Nilsson H., 1995, *Bedömning av ventilerade förarstolar*, Arbetslivsinstitutet, Research report No. 27.



Just a TICK!

Check out your safety program status with the
Hazardous Substances Management Checklist

- All containers properly labelled?
 - MSDS available for every substance?
 - Hazard register in order?
 - Exposure risk assessment conducted?
 - Control measures documented?
 - Control measures up and running?
- 

- 
- Procedures established for new substances?**
 - Air monitoring done? (if required)**
 - Chemical handling training program in place?**
 - Training attendance recorded?**
 - Confined spaces identified and entry restricted?**
 - Medical checks done? (if required)**
 - Storage in compliance with regulations?**
 - Emergency procedures in place?**
 - Emergency drills performed?**
 - Proper waste disposal in place?**

HARD OF HEARING...

...HARD DONE BY AT WORK

One in five hearing impaired people are being harassed by their workmates. They are often kept out of the work fraternity, and many are candidates for suicide, a survey reports.

A large survey conducted in Sweden by the National Association of the Hearing Impaired has shown that about twenty per cent, or one in five, of hearing impaired people are treated with condescension at work, making them feel bullied and ousted by their colleagues.

People affected by hearing loss run the risk of becoming isolated from their surroundings. Not hearing what people are saying may lead to misunderstandings, mistakes and other conflicts. Some are treated as though their impairment means that they are less intelligent than people with normal hearing.

The survey included over 600 people, aged between 20 and 65 years. Half of them had been hearing impaired from birth, the other half had suffered hearing loss as adults.

Twenty per cent felt very harassed at work. The harassment had been going on for years, occurring daily or weekly. Three quarters of all people surveyed had had some form of negative experiences at work as a result of their condition.

About twenty persons of the people asked had attempted suicide several times — a response that surprised even those researchers who had been working in the field for years.

The most vulnerable group was middle-aged single women who had been hearing-impaired since birth.

VOLUNTARY ISOLATION

About four in ten people became isolated from their peers more or less on purpose. They did not feel free to reveal their condition, and found no one to turn to. A common "solution" was to guess what's being said in a conversation and simply pretend to hear.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

The other side of the coin is that many hearing-impaired people have received a lot of support from both colleagues and management.

People with positive experiences usually suffered their impairment as adults. They were already an established part of the work team, and were taken care of by their workmates and their supervisors after the injury.

Many interviewees expressed concern about the lack of someone in the workplace who had thorough understanding of their problem; someone to talk to.

The research team are now embarking on a new project in a positive vein: to focus on the "happy" group of hearing-impaired people in order to find out what makes them feel good about their work situation.

FROM BAD TO GREAT:

Margaretha Fisk-Lindholm, 48, has been hearing impaired since birth. Her hearing loss is quite significant, about 65—70 per cent. Margaretha has had mixed fortunes in her working life.

In one workplace, where she was employed as a supervisor, the harassment started on her very first workday, and it didn't stop. She started feeling afraid and depressed. Her sickdays accumulated.

"I began to think that everybody shunned me like a leper because of my hearing impairment."

A year was enough. Margaretha picked up her demoralised mind, took an adult education course, and landed another job.

These days, her hearing damage presents no problem to her work in a town planning office. Her telephone has an in-built circuit that cuts out surrounding noise while transmitting the spoken voice. Her work room has been acoustically designed with noise absorption panels in the ceiling. Her computer is insulated, and even her computer screen is of the no-noise LCD type. She also has a new hearing aid, attached to a titanium bayonet fitting in her skull, just behind the ear.

Margaretha has a lot of advice to people in her situation:

"When you're new to a job, you hear many new voices. It becomes easier to hear what they're saying once you learn to recognise their voices."

"Some people talk quietly. You just have to ask them to repeat themselves — you can't expect them to speak louder just for your sake."

"You shouldn't be afraid to tell people about your handicap."

"I don't know why you hesitate about telling people. Maybe it is the old thing, that you're supposed to be stupid if you are hearing impaired."

"There is no reason for lying about your infliction. Anyone can end up in that situation."



Source: Lundgren H., 1993: Arbetsmiljö, No 6, pp 16-19

RIGHT DOWN TO THE GROUND

GETTING DOWN TO EARTH WHEN HANDLING FLAMMABLE MATERIALS

Static electricity can be a great hazard when handling solvents and other flammable substances. Filling, tapping, mixing and filtering are procedures where the flammable substance could ignite from even the tiniest spark.

The electric conduction properties of liquids vary, and play a big part in the risk of ignition. Solvents that are poor conductors (such as petrol and toluene) can still be a high risk, since they can generate flammable vapour during handling.

Liquid solvents with high electrical conduction properties are more susceptible to static electricity. These substances may easily become electrically charged as they move across solid surfaces, or when they are split up into smaller units. This could occur as the liquid moves through a pipe, runs across the edge of a metal conduit, or is strained through a filter mesh. Especially high charges may be caused through filtration.

When an electrically charged liquid is collected in a container, the vessel itself will also be charged. Two containers could have widely differing charges, and if they are placed next to each other, a spark could ignite the contents.

Using solvents for surface cleaning (benchtops for instance), can generate high charges — even in insulating materials such as glass or plastic.

Moreover, the person handling the material in the course of pouring or dispensing runs a great risk of becoming electrically charged.

STATIC DISCHARGE PREVENTION

EARTHING

- Connect all conducting items with each other, and earth them.

This includes vessels, funnels, sieves, filters, nozzles, and other tools. These items should be connected to each other and earthed before the work starts. Use copper wires with screw or clamp connectors. Make sure the wires cannot be accidentally disconnected. In very hazardous circumstances, warning systems can be used to alert the user if the earth connection is broken.

Static electricity earthing systems should be kept separate from the earthing of electrical equipment.



MINIMISE THE POSSIBILITY OF WORKERS BECOMING CHARGED

- **Furniture:** Chairs and benches should not insulate the person sitting on them, nor contribute to static charges. Avoid plastic covers and shellacked surfaces. Avoid rubber or plastic feet on the furniture.
- **Clothing:** Must not promote static electricity. Synthetic fibres and wool are unsuitable. Cotton will only become charged in very dry conditions.
- **Gloves:** Conductive gloves could sometimes be used to direct static charge to earthed tools and appliances.
- **Antistatic treatment:** Can be used on clothing, but is only temporary.
- **Shoes and boots:** Should feature conductive soles.
- **Floors:** Should divert the charges from electrostatically charged items and persons. Even a minute discharge is enough to ignite certain substances, such as hydrocarbon mixtures.

ELIMINATE A FLAMMABLE ATMOSPHERE

- Avoid open containers.
- Ensure adequate exhaust ventilation of flammable vapour and general ventilation. High humidity (more than 60 per cent) often helps to minimise the risk of static charge.

ENSURE THAT CONDUCTIVE SURFACES DO NOT BECOME COATED BY INSULATING MATERIALS

INCREASE THE CONDUCTIVITY OF THE PRODUCTS AND TOOLS

- Use antistatic treatments, increased water content, addition of alcohol and so on. Make sure the addition of the antistatic substance does not lead to another hazard.
- Avoid free-falling liquid or limit the height of the fall

MINIMISE SPLASHES

- Direct liquid beams along the wall of a container. This helps to decrease the risk of splashes and breaking up of the liquid.

EDUCATE PEOPLE

- Anyone handling hazardous substances should understand the risks associated with static electricity and the necessary measures to minimise the risks.

CONDUCT REGULAR CHECKS

- Earthing systems
- Earth connections
- Floor and shoe resistance
- Clothing



Source: *The Swedish Work Environment Fund (No publ. Date), Riskerna med lösningsmedel, p 60*



DUST OFF YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Do YOU KNOW THE BASICS OF DUST?

Dust means particles that are small enough to be able to float around in moving air. It is the natural swirls and eddies in the air that allow dust to rise and move with the air flow,

Some of the dust we breathe in is caught in the mucous membranes of the nose, throat and bronchi. From here, the particles are expelled from the body, partly by tiny hairs lining the respiratory tract, and partly through sneezing and coughing.

However, some of the smaller particles may reach the very fine branches of the bronchi, and all the way to the alveoli in the lungs. When too many particles gather in the respiratory system, disease conditions may occur.

The main types of respiratory disease include poisoning, allergies, lung disease and various cancers.

Dust can be divided into five general groups, depending on the disease they cause:

QUARTZ DUST (AND MIXTURES CONTAINING QUARTZ)

- Fibrosis of the lungs, that is, a stiffening of the lung tissue due to connective tissue growing over the dust

ASBESTOS DUST (AND MIXTURES CONTAINING ASBESTOS)

- Fibrosis of the lungs, and various cancers

METALLIC DUST (AND DUST FROM ALLOYS)

- Poisoning

ORGANIC DUST (DUST FROM ANIMALS AND PLANTS)

- Allergic reactions

OTHER TYPES OF DUST (E.G. ARSENIC, CARBON, SOOT)

- A variety of diseases

Apart from damaging the lungs, asbestos and dust from glass- and mineral fibres can cause skin inflammation.

CARRIER OF OTHER SUBSTANCES

Dust can also act to make other substances more hazardous, by acting as a transport vehicle



DUST-FREE WOODWORKING

from the air and into the lung. For instance, gases and very small particles from tobacco smoke can ride "piggyback" on the dust, reaching the lungs that way.

Electrically charged air molecules (ions) can also stick to dust particles. This will affect the movements of the dust in areas where electromagnetic fields are present, for instance, near a video display unit. This means that the dust in a room does not necessarily move with the air flow.

ALLERGIES

Sensitivity to certain substances is a growing problem in society. Only an extraordinarily tiny amount of a substance is needed to affect a sensitised person. We are talking about extremely minute amounts: a single drop of a substance poured into one end of a lake is enough to affect a sensitised person at the other end.

A further complication is dust mites: they feed on organic dust, and their secretions can contribute to allergies in people. All areas should therefore be kept free of dust. To conduct extra cleaning after a person has contracted an allergy is to act too late.

DUST EXPLOSION

In some industries there may be a risk of dust explosions from large amounts of combustible dust particles, such as wood or coal dust, metallic dust, cork, flour, starch and many other substances.

A small dust explosion could stir up larger amounts of dust, subsequently causing a secondary, much more powerful explosion.

DUSTING OFF

First: minimise or eliminate the source of the dust. Dust is often caused by treatment of a material, such as polishing, sanding, sawing and so on. The material itself could be replaced by a less harmful one, or the production processes could perhaps be altered with the aim of generating less dust.

Second: collect the dust at its source, perhaps by encasing the production zone.

Third: Bind the dust by wetting it. But don't forget the risk of mould forming, thus adding other allergy risks.

Fourth: Improve the general ventilation in the work place.

Last: Use personal protective equipment. This is only a last resource, should the first four measures be impossible.

Source: Enqvist J., 1993, *Arbetsmiljö*, No 7, p 43

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REPLACEABLE
PEOPLE'S HEALTH
ISN'T**

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SUMMARY

Sleepy truckdrivers (Page 1)

New research has found that a simple random sequence of four tones every few minutes is enough to keep long-haul truckdrivers much more alert en route.

Paper allergy (Page 2)

Colophony (or rosin) is found in a wide variety of products, notably paper. Yet it is a well-known skin allergen.

Cutting drums (Page 4)

Cutting drums can have explosive consequences — even if the drum has been empty for years.

Cleaning premises (Page 5)

Tips on cleaning methods in the workplace to avoid unnecessary allergy risks

In the hot seat (Page 5)

Truckdrivers cool down with a ventilated seat

Wall chart: "Hazardous substances management checklist" (Pages 6-7)

Hard of hearing — hard done by (Page 8)

Harassment of people with hearing impairment. Surveys show that three quarters of all hearing impaired people have had bad experiences at work

Earthing and flammable materials (Page 9)

Static electricity can ignite volatile substances. Learn how to minimise the risk.

Dust — the basics (Page 10)

Brief run-down of different types of dust and their health effects.

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