



BSW  
Timber

# Hazards and Risks of Handling Sawn Timber

An informational guide from BSW Timber





This guide is only intended to cover species of softwood and preservative treatments. The hazards are centred around the handling of timber when purchased from our key customers.

Hazards to consider when handling and sawing timber are likely to fall into two main categories:

- Manual Handling
- Exposure to hazardous substances

## The risks of handling sawn timber

Examples of risks from manual handling could be impact injuries or muscle strains from lifting heavy timber, a risk of cuts and splinters when handling rough sawn timber, or injuries that occur when using tools that have sharp blades, teeth, or edges. Lifting aids and PPE such as gloves may help to prevent or reduce these kinds of risks.

Examples of risks from exposure to hazardous substances may occur when sawing, machining, or sanding timber. Wood dust and chemically treated timber should always be considered hazardous if there is a possibility of inhaling the dust, especially if it is very fine dust, or if there is a chance of exposure to large concentrations of dust.

Working outside, implementing dust extraction on tools, and Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) may help to prevent or reduce these kinds of risks. Timber also contains resins which may be harmful to susceptible people, so wear gloves to reduce risk. Dust should also be controlled to prevent fire risks.

When handling timber, always consider:

- Size & Shape
- Weight
- Length
- Is the product wet or dry I.E can it slip from your hands when handling.
- Type of product I.E Sawn or Planed All Round (PAR)
- Is it 'Green' I.E untreated, or has it been treated with a preservative
- What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you need to wear I.E Gloves, dust respirator, hearing, or eye protection



## The hazards and risks of wood dust

### Why is it necessary to control wood dust?

Wood dust must be classed as a substance hazardous to health because it is classed as a respiratory sensitiser, meaning there is a small risk of causing serious non-reversible health problems to susceptible individuals, including:

- Skin Disorders such as dermatitis
- Obstruction in the nose, and rhinitis
- Asthma
- A rare type of nasal cancer.

All dusts are classed as irritants and as such have been assigned a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL). The WEL for softwood dust is 5mg/m3 (based on an 8-hour time-weighted average).

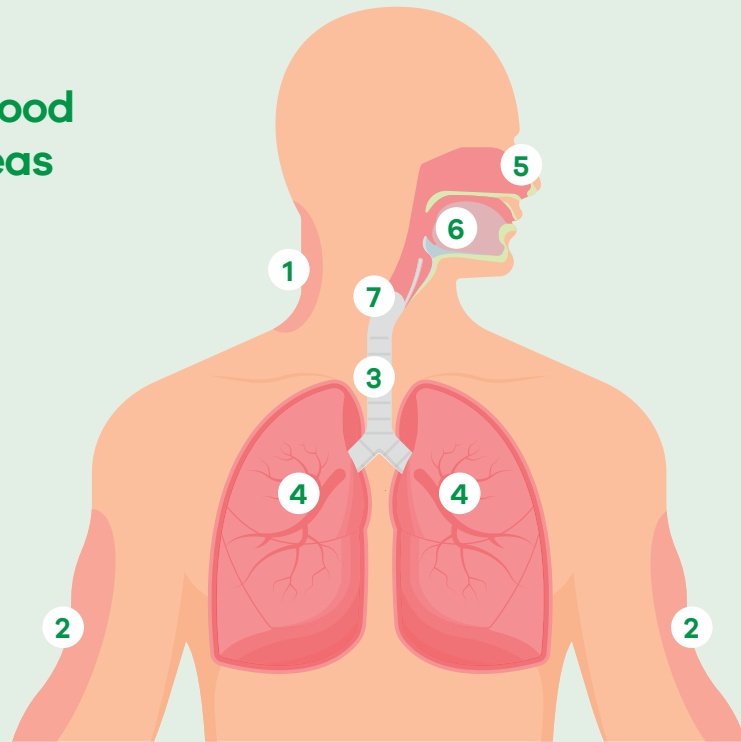
From a safety perspective, wood dust is flammable and, in certain situations, can cause a fire or explosion. Every year, premises are severely damaged or destroyed by wood dust fires that often start in dust extraction equipment, or is ignited inadvertently from friction, or tasks such as hot work.

There are also benefits to controlling wood dust from a business point of view:

- A better working environment, meaning less cleaning time, and exposure reduction
- Reduction in the risk of slip and trip hazards caused by settled dust
- Compliance with H&S legislation

### Toxic wood and wood dust exposure areas

- 1 Bare skin on neck and face
- 2 Bare skin on arms and hands
- 3 Trachea
- 4 Lungs
- 5 Sinus cavity
- 6 Oral cavity
- 7 Larynx



### Controlling Dust

Wood dust is substance that has the potential to cause irritation, or contribute to specific illnesses such as dermatitis or occupational asthma, therefore exposure must be reduced to as low a concentration level as is reasonably practicable (ALARP).

LEV systems and vacuuming should be used in preference to other measures such as using compressed air to blow down, or sweeping, to reduce exposure further. Large volumes of treated timber dust should be disposed of correctly using licensed waste handlers.





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