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Control of Dust – Code of Practice

Imperial Property Division
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Introduction

This policy outlines how the Property Division complies with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 (as amended) by assessing, preventing and informing on the risks associated with common construction tasks that generate dust. Construction dust can pose significant health risks, and in some cases, may even be fatal. Prolonged exposure to these dusts can lead to life-altering lung diseases, including cancer, silicosis, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

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Assessment

At the start of every project, the design team must address and eliminate dust hazards through engineering controls, adhering to the hierarchy of risk management as outlined in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR). Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) must be implemented across the entire work area where practicable. Where hazards cannot be eliminated, contractors must manage them effectively, ensuring compliance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) should only be used as a last resort.

When assessing construction work hazards, the following key steps must be taken to determine exposure levels and establish appropriate control measures to protect workers and the environment:

- **Assess the risks**: Evaluate the potential exposure to dust and identify all sources of risk.
- **Agree on control measures**: Engage with those affected to determine suitable control strategies.
- **Regularly review controls**: Ensure all agreed measures remain effective, fit for purpose, and compliant with current regulations.

Dust control measures will be monitored during the Client's routine Red-Amber-Green (RAG) Health and Safety inspections. Any breaches of legislation or policy observed on-site will be reported to the Site Manager, and necessary improvements will be implemented promptly. Inspection outcomes, including scores related to dust control breaches, will be discussed with site management before finalising the report.

Prevention

Dust hazards must be eliminated wherever possible, using engineering controls such as LEV in compliance with COSHH Regulations 2002 and HSE guidance (e.g., HSG258: "Controlling airborne contaminants at work"). When elimination is not feasible, contractors must implement site-specific risk management practices. It is critical to note that PPE and RPE are last-resort measures and not substitutes for engineering controls.

Specific Measures:

- During soft-stripping activities, especially floor-covering removal, operatives and visitors must wear a properly fitted mask compliant with UK standards, such as FFP3 masks under BS EN 149.
- Water suppression systems and vacuum cleaners with HEPA filters must be used where practical. The use of brooms and Dusmo should be limited to last-resort scenarios.

Health Surveillance

Employers must provide health surveillance for employees frequently exposed to dust or those at heightened risk (e.g., preexisting medical conditions). This complies with COSHH and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Health records must be maintained, including surveillance outcomes and fitness-for-work assessments, while ensuring they are kept separate from confidential medical records.

Contractors should have an occupational health scheme, such as Constructing Better Health (CBH), and offer participation to all supply chain partners. Supply chain partners and self-employed workers registered with CBH will meet the Client's requirements.

Information and Training

Operatives must receive training to ensure safe task execution, correct use of controls, and adherence to safety protocols. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring operatives:

- Understand dust risks and their potential health impacts.
- Are trained in using and maintaining dust controls.
- Are knowledgeable in cleaning and maintaining equipment.
- Can properly use and care for issued RPE/PPE.
- Feel empowered to cease work if control measures fail to provide adequate protection.

Refer to Appendix 1 for examples of best practice controls for managing dust exposure on construction sites.

Document Revision Dates

Version	Date	Reason
V1	March 2016	Policy Created.
V2	January 2025	Policy reviewed, procedures and processes reviewed. Organisational chart information updated where mentioned. Branding updated.

Appendix 1

Best Practice Dust Control Measures

Control Measures	Example Image
Enclosures / Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) • Enclosing the work area to stop dust escaping by using sheeting or temporary screens. • Using LEV to remove dusty air from the work area, e.g. in enclosed spaces such as indoor locations	
Water • Water damps down dust clouds. However, it needs to be used correctly. This means enough water supplied at the right levels for the whole time that the work is being done. Just wetting the material beforehand does not work. • During sweeping up works, a fine spray of water should be used.	
On-tool extraction • Removes dust as it is being produced. It is a type of local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system that fits directly onto the tool. This 'system' consists of several individual parts – the tool, capturing hood, extraction unit and tubing. Using an extraction unit to the correct specification (i.e. H (High) M (Medium) or L (Low) Class filter unit). Do not just use a general commercial vacuum.	

Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

Water or on-tool extraction may not always be appropriate or they might not reduce exposure enough. Often RPE has to be provided as well. You will need to make sure that the RPE is:

- Adequate for the amount and type of dust – RPE has an assigned protection factor (APF) which shows how much protection is provided to the operative. The general level for construction dust is an APF of 20. This means the wearer only breathes one twentieth of the amount of dust in the air;
- Suitable for the work – disposable masks or half masks can become uncomfortable to wear for long periods. Powered RPE helps minimise this. Consider it when people are working for more than an hour without a break where permissible in line with manufacturers guidelines;
- Compatible with other items of protective equipment;
- Fits the user. Face fit testing is needed for tight- fitting masks;
- Worn correctly. Anyone using tightfitting masks also needs to be clean shaven. Remember: RPE is the last line of protection. If you are just relying on RPE you need to be able to justify your reasons for this.

Ride on / Manual Sweepers

- Collects excessive dust that has been created via vacuum system.
- Ideal for larger areas to reduce manual methods (broom, etc.).
- Low noise output.
- Battery operated and chargeable via 110v

Brooms • Brooms should only be used as a last resort if no other equipment can be used to remove the dust. • If brooms are to be used, then water suppression and masks must be worn (as highlighted above). • A product that can be of consideration if the need of a broom is still required is Dusmo. Dusmo is blended with active ingredients that help to allay potential airborne dust whilst collecting dirt and debris from the floor surface.