Hand-Arm Vibration (HAVS) Toolbox Talk

Key points, do's and don'ts, and questions with answers. The attendance sign-off sheet is on the last page.

Asked to show your toolbox talk records? The Site Book keeps each talk and its signatures with the job, on Pro: **thesitebook.co.uk/features/toolbox-talks**

Key points to cover

- HAVS is caused by regular, frequent use of vibrating hand-held tools such as breakers, grinders, hammer drills, and compactors
- Symptoms include tingling, numbness, loss of grip strength, and fingers turning white in cold weather
- The Exposure Action Value (EAV) is 2.5 m/s² A(8) — at this point the employer must take action to reduce exposure
- The Exposure Limit Value (ELV) is 5 m/s² A(8) — this must not be exceeded
- Tool selection matters — low-vibration tools and anti-vibration mounts can dramatically reduce exposure
- Early reporting of symptoms is critical — damage is permanent once established

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Use the lowest-vibration tool available for the job
- Take regular breaks from vibrating tools — follow the exposure calculator guidance
- Keep your hands warm before and during vibrating tool use
- Report any symptoms early — tingling, numbness, loss of grip, or white fingers
- Let the tool do the work — a tight grip increases vibration transmitted to the hands

Don't

- Never exceed your daily vibration exposure limit
- Never use vibrating tools without checking how long you can safely use them (trigger time)
- Never ignore early symptoms — HAVS damage is permanent and irreversible
- Never use tools with worn, cracked, or missing anti-vibration handles
- Never grip the tool harder than necessary — this significantly increases vibration exposure

Questions to check understanding

Ask each question and let the crew answer before you read out the answer.

Q1. What does HAVS stand for and what causes it?

Answer: Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome. It is caused by regular and frequent exposure to vibration from hand-held power tools such as breakers, grinders, hammer drills, and compactors. The vibration damages nerves, blood vessels, and joints in the hands and arms.

Q2. What are the early symptoms of HAVS?

Answer: Tingling or numbness in the fingers (especially at night), reduced grip strength, and fingers turning white or blue in cold conditions (known as vibration white finger). Pain and stiffness in the hands and wrists may also develop.

Q3. What are the Exposure Action Value and Exposure Limit Value?

Answer: The EAV is 2.5 m/s² A(8) — at this level the employer must introduce measures to reduce exposure. The ELV is 5 m/s² A(8) — this must not be exceeded. These are 8-hour normalised values based on tool vibration magnitude and daily trigger time.

Q4. How can exposure to hand-arm vibration be reduced?

Answer: Select low-vibration tools, maintain tools properly (blunt cutting tools vibrate more), limit daily trigger time through job rotation, use anti-vibration mounts where available, take regular breaks, and keep hands warm to maintain good circulation.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Hand-Arm Vibration (HAVS) Toolbox Talk

Everyone who attended prints their name and signs to confirm they received this talk.

Date _____ **Time** _____

Site or location _____ **Presented by** _____

No.	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			

Presenter's signature _____

This is general guidance for UK construction sites. Check it against your own risk assessment, method statement and the site before you deliver it. Toolbox talk from The Site Book, reviewed 26 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/hand-arm-vibration.