

## ULTRA ACCESS

### HAVS - Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (Part A)

And how the certain tools used by scaffolders could cause HAVS to occur

**HAVS** (or Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome) is a serious occupational health condition affecting many construction workers exposed to prolonged vibration from tools like jackhammers, grinders, or drills.

**HAVS** results from repeated vibration damaging blood vessels, nerves, muscles, and joints in the hands and arms. Symptoms include tingling, numbness, or pain in fingers, often worsening in cold weather.

Those working with tools that cause a lot of vibrations may experience "white finger" (blanching due to reduced blood flow), loss of grip strength, or dexterity issues, impacting their ability to handle tools safely.

Severe cases can lead to permanent disability, affecting both work and daily life.

Scaffolders are also exposed to hand-arm vibration via their daily use of tools (and quite often), but not in the way one might think...

Theres 3 main vibrating tools that a scaffolder would use on a regular basis.  
(using Makita as the image benchmark)



**"Scaffolders"  
Impact  
Wrench**



**SDS Hammer  
Drill**



**Reciprocating  
/ "Recip" Saw**

There is a (generally accepted) level of vibration exposure that must not be exceeded, known as the exposure limit value.

**The Exposure Limit Value** (or ELV) is the maximum amount of vibration a person may be exposed to on any single day (usually based on an 8 hour period).

Theres mixed information online, so for this publication, we'll keep it to our own experiences of using the above 3...

The **"Scaffolders" Impact Wrench** has a high level of vibration when using them, but due to the amount of "off-trigger" time, its usually considered acceptable to use these throughout a regular 8 hour working day - the issues with these is the noise they produce, and the usual lack of protective ear plugs, whilst using them.

On the other hand, the **SDS Hammer Drill** (used for scaffold ties) and the **Reciprocating / "Recip" Saw** (for cutting materials on the go) have higher ELV levels, and usually used for longer bursts, and its these 2 in particular that **ULTRA ACCESS** has concerns about...

Impact Gloves and limiting the amount of time you have to use the above 2 - by taking turns and using the right sized materials in the first place would be a quick way to limit your exposure to their vibration.

Part B will discuss HOW to measure HAVS...