





Keeping The Rail Industry On Track

It has been estimated that 300,000 working days are lost each year in the UK due to absence caused by hand and arm disabilities.

THE CHALLENGE

Hand-arm vibration syndrome is a significant worry for many industries. The impact of injury or disability on individuals and on business can be severe. And too often, the cause is vibration from hand-held power tools.

The symptoms of hand-arm vibration syndrome can be painful and recovery can be slow. In the worst cases, permanent musculoskeletal and vascular damage may result.

With the rail industry heavily reliant on tamping tools to keep train tracks level, workers operating the vital equipment typically only do so for short periods to avoid the risks posed by vibration.

HSS customer Network Rail was naturally concerned about the problem and turned to us in search of an answer.

THE SOLUTION

We investigated the issue, in conjunction with our equipment suppliers, and together identified how the design of the tamping tool attached to the breakers – used to move ballast under railway sleepers in order to lift and level track – could be improved to reduce hand-arm vibration.

Our knowledge of the market – both demand for and supply of specialised equipment – and our commitment to meeting the requirements of increasingly stringent health & safety legislation led to a solution that proved effective in a series of trials. The Hilti 905, for example, carried a recommended operating time on breakers of up to thirty minutes trigger-time per person per day. But with modifications, that time can be increased to one hour and fifteen minutes.

In a complementary move, we also introduced a series of training documents and 'pocket guides' for rail workers on the implications of hand-arm vibration, as well as clear operating data for equipment.

THE BENEFITS

The modified equipment that we have been able to source for our customer Network Rail brings with it substantial positive implications for the health & safety of individual workers, for productivity and of course for overall project costs.

Health & safety has long been a key focus for HSS. This is matched by our commitment to bringing added value to all customers, improving their efficiency and saving them money.

We're proud of our record of working successfully with equipment suppliers and manufacturers to develop and implement innovative solutions to practical problems – all part of our belief that customers deserve the best products and service available.