




# **SUPERVISING FOR SAFETY IN** **WOODWORKING**

A large, stylized illustration of a chain link, rendered in shades of grey with thick black outlines. A white label with black text is wrapped around the link.

***SUPERVISORS - A VITAL LINK***

**ARE YOU A GOOD SUPERVISOR?**



# ***SUPERVISING FOR SAFETY***

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As an employee you have a legal duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and others.

As a **supervisor** you have a legal duty to co-operate with your employer in providing necessary supervision for health and safety.

Your job is not limited to producing a good quality product. Supervisors are a vital link in the chain for effective management of health and safety.

Good supervisors lead by example; they get good results and develop a motivated, safety conscious workforce. You are paid to supervise - and this includes supervising for safety.

Supervisors are often expected to be management's 'eyes and ears' on the shop floor, but HSE investigations in the woodworking industry have shown that supervisors are often unaware of the full range of responsibilities they have as part of the management team.

Your manager must ensure that you know **your** responsibilities and carry them out.

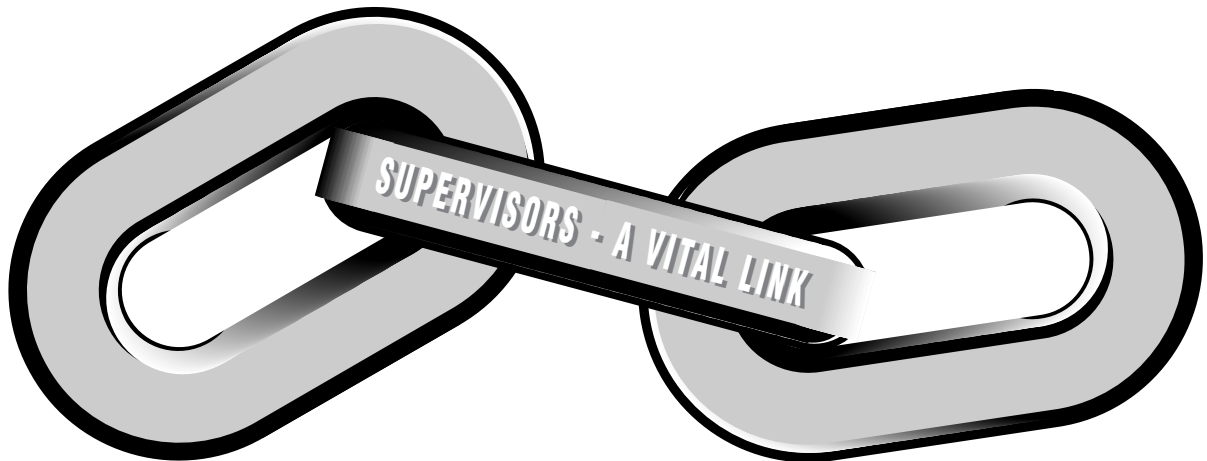
***Does the buck stop with the supervisor?***

**NO**

and you should seek to avoid that for the sake of everyone's safety

**BUT**

you are a vital link



***This booklet is designed to help you identify your responsibilities for providing a safe and healthy workplace.***

# ***Do THESE COMMENTS SOUND FAMILIAR?***

**These are actual quotes from people interviewed during HSE investigations.**

**"I COULD NOT BE BOTHERED TO USE A JIG - IT TAKES UP TIME"**

A 57-year-old with 40 years experience severely lacerated his hand on a spindle moulder.

**"I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP OUT"**

Walking through another department where he had no responsibility, a 53-year-old tried to solve a problem on a multi-cutter moulder with which he was not familiar.

His hand was badly injured.

**WHAT THE SUPERVISORS SAID**

**"No-one told me I was responsible for health and safety"**

**"I wouldn't insult his intelligence by asking why the guards were not properly adjusted"**

**"I just make sure we produce a good quality cupboard"**

**"Does the company have a Health and Safety Policy? I have not seen one"**

**"He said he was a skilled machinist - I leave guarding and all that to him"**

**"HOW WILL I EVER GET A GIRL-FRIEND NOW?"**

An 18-year-old apprentice had a finger amputated while working unsupervised on a tenoner.

He was trying to remove a jammed workpiece without isolating the machine.

**"THERE ARE SOME RULES UP IN THE CANTEEN - I THINK"**

A 44-year-old untrained operator severed the top of his thumb on an unguarded dimension saw.

# WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY?

Where do you **think** each person has particular responsibilities - you may tick more than one box.

## WHOSE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO ENSURE THAT:

	OPERATOR	SUPERVISOR	MANAGER
People are properly supervised for safety at all times?			
People work and behave safely at all times?			
People are properly trained?			
People are obeying company health and safety rules?			
Everyone is aware of the hazards in the workplace?			
Machinery is properly guarded when used?			
Machines and equipment are inspected to ensure they are safe to use?			
People are using the correct safety appliances properly, eg jigs and pushsticks?			
People are not unnecessarily exposed to hazardous substances?			
People are using the correct personal protective equipment?			
The working area is kept clean, clear and tidy?			
Everyone knows what to do in an emergency?			
Action is taken following accidents and near misses?			

*How did you do? Turn the page to find out .....*

**WHOSE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY  
IS IT TO ENSURE THAT:**

	OPERATOR	SUPERVISOR	MANAGER
People are properly supervised for safety at all times?		✓	✓
People work and behave safely at all times?	✓	✓	✓
People are properly trained?		✓	✓
People are obeying company health and safety rules?	✓	✓	✓
Everyone is aware of the hazards in the workplace?		✓	✓
Machinery is properly guarded when used?	✓	✓	✓
Machines and equipment are inspected to ensure they are safe to use?		✓	✓
People are using the correct safety appliances properly, eg jigs and pushsticks?		✓	✓
People are not unnecessarily exposed to hazardous substances?		✓	✓
People are using the correct personal protective equipment?		✓	✓
The working area is kept clean, clear and tidy?	✓	✓	✓
Everyone knows what to do in an emergency?	✓	✓	✓
Action is taken following accidents and near misses?	✓	✓	✓

***SURPRISED?*** *So were many other supervisors we spoke to.....*

**Read on to recognise the most common and important examples where you have key responsibilities in the chain of control and can make a vital contribution.**

# MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

## IS THE RIGHT PERSON USING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT?

Are **your** workers properly instructed?

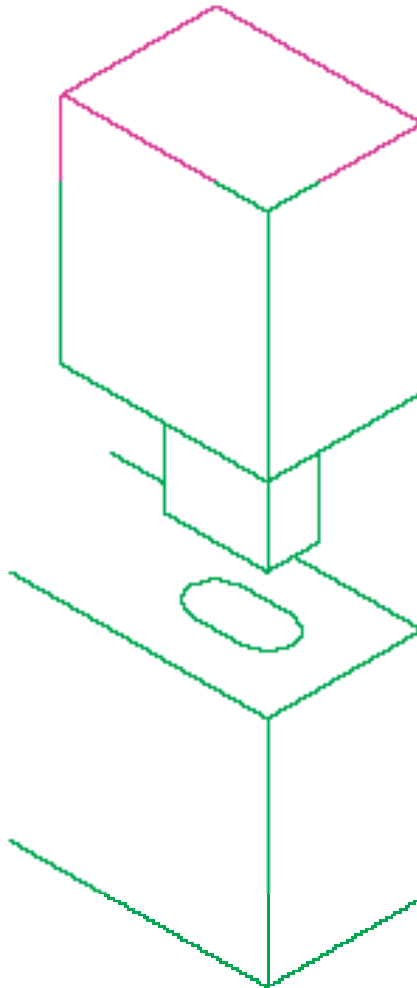
What choices do **you** have?

Is the person **you** have chosen to do the job sufficiently confident, reliable, experienced etc to do it safely, or are you putting square pegs into round holes?

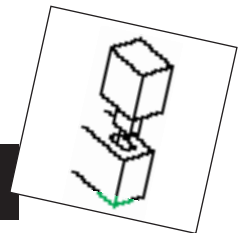
Are **your** machinists trained and authorised?

Do **you** know what machine or equipment is best (safest) for the job?

How do **you** decide how much direct supervision you need to give to ensure safety?



DID YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE?



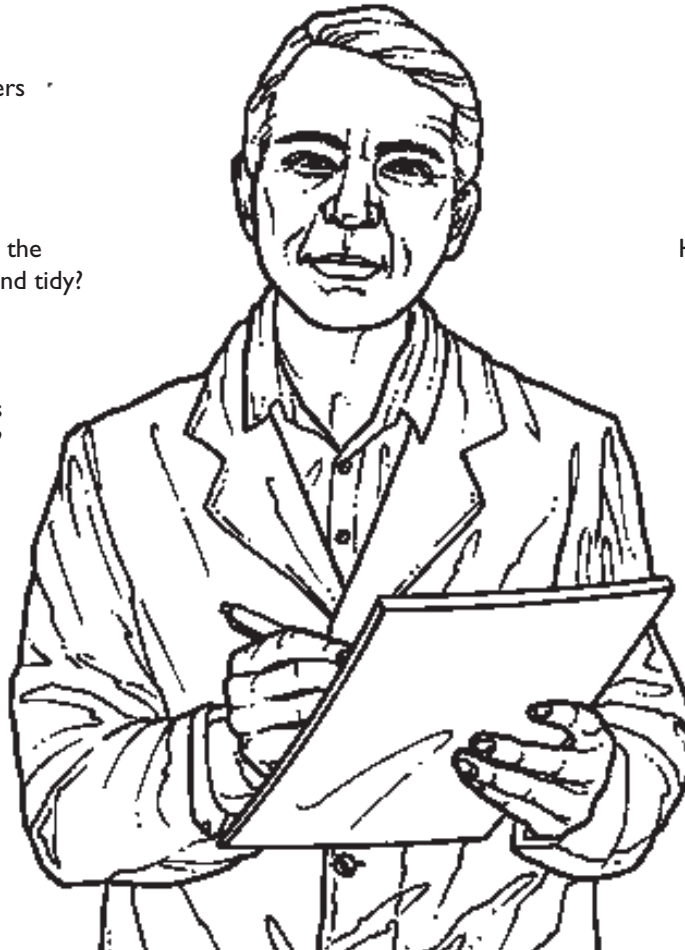
# A SAFE WORKPLACE

## IS YOUR SHOP/DEPARTMENT A SAFE PLACE IN WHICH TO WORK?

Do **you** stop your workers skylarking?

How do **you** ensure that the workplace is kept clean and tidy?

Who keeps the gangways and working places clear?  
Does the system work?

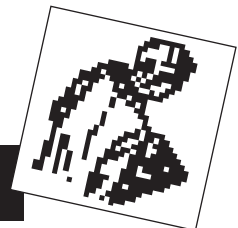


Where is eating and drinking permitted in the workplace?

How do **you** ensure that your workers wear suitable (safe) working clothes?

What do **you** do to identify the hazards to your workers in your workshop?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT GOES ON WHEN  
YOUR BACK IS TURNED?





# MOVING AND STORING GOODS

## HOW SAFE IS YOUR SYSTEM FOR TRANSPORT AND HANDLING?

What can be stored, how and where?

Who is allowed to drive the lift truck and other lifting machinery and why?

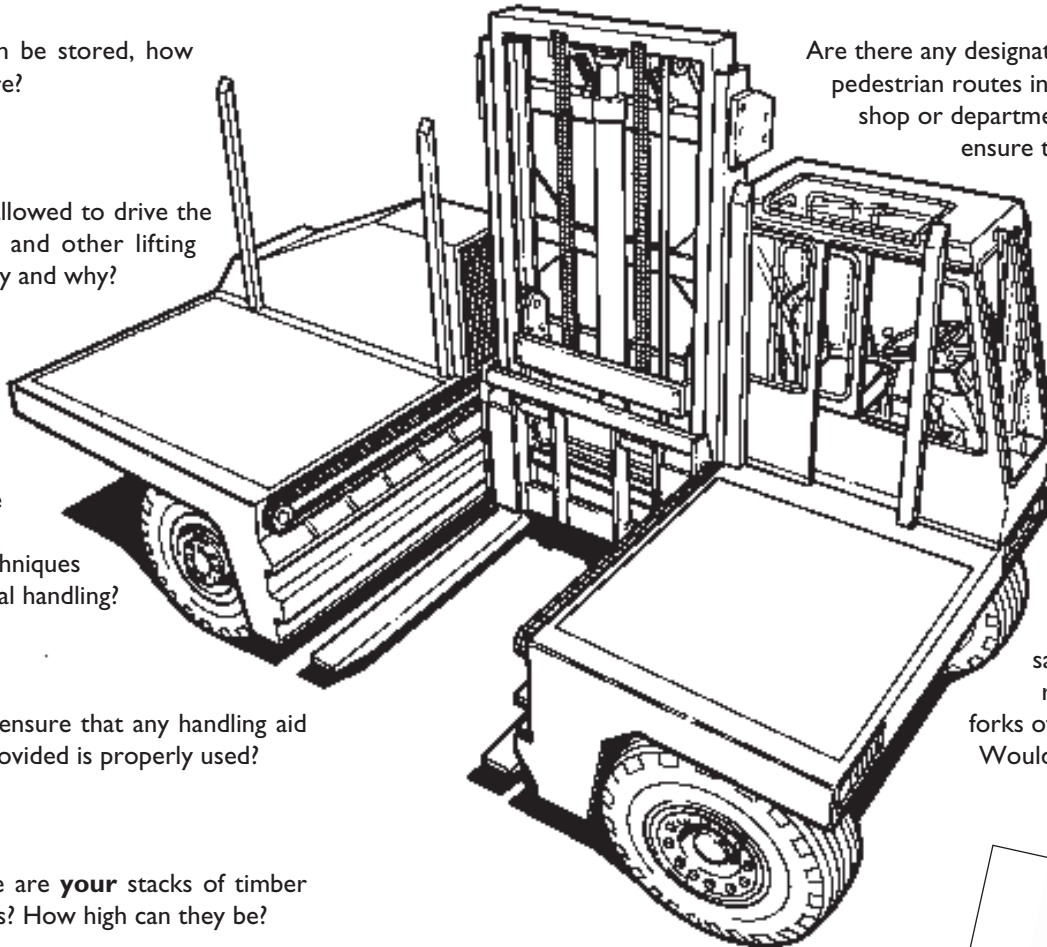
Do **you** and your workers know the correct lifting techniques for manual handling?

Do **you** ensure that any handling aid that is provided is properly used?

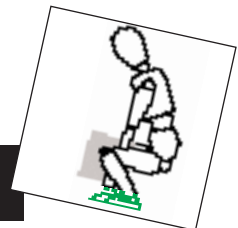
How safe are **your** stacks of timber or boards? How high can they be?

Are there any designated traffic or pedestrian routes in your workshop or department? Do **you** ensure that they are kept clear?

What would **you** do if you saw someone riding on the forks of a lift truck? Would you report them?

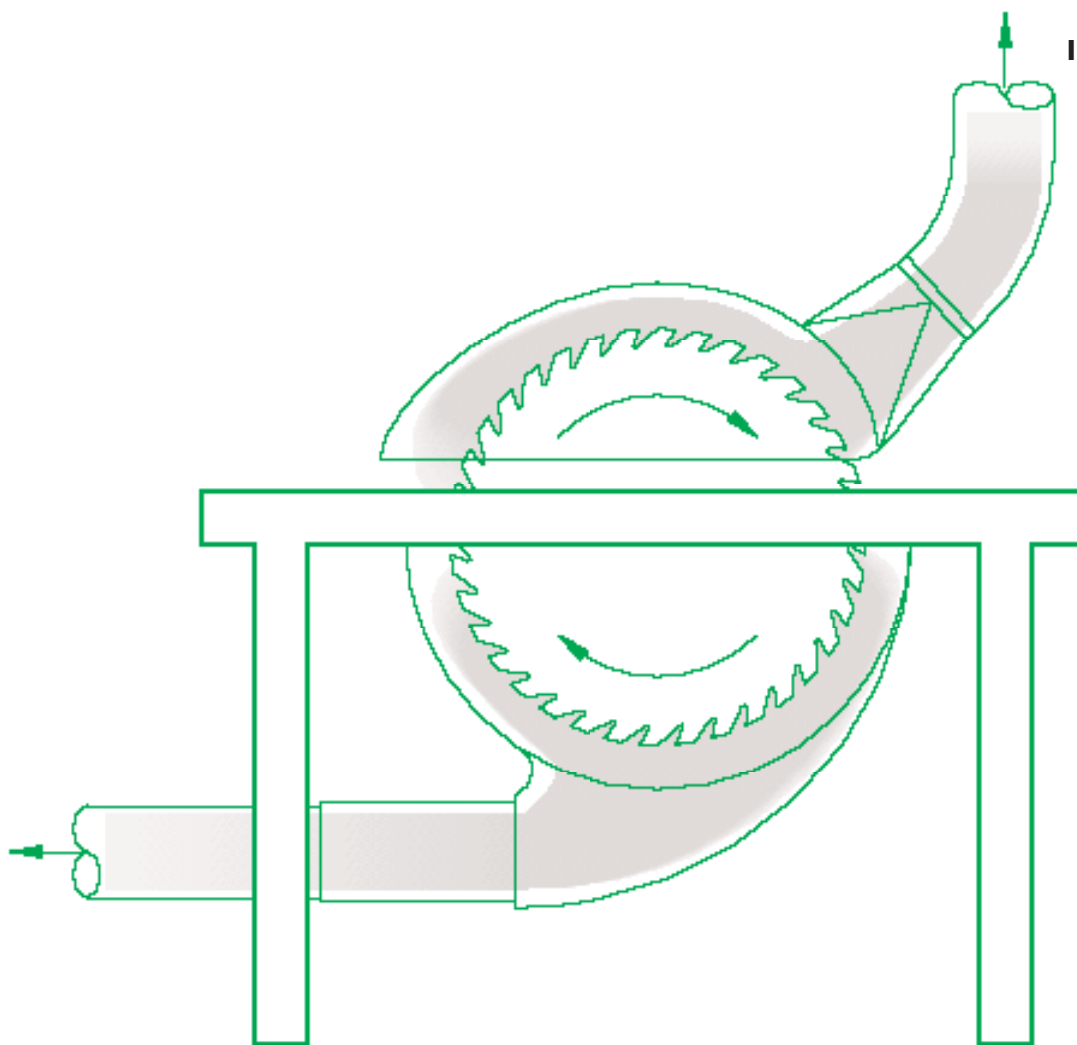


**THE VAST MAJORITY OF FATAL ACCIDENTS IN WOODWORKING INVOLVE POOR HANDLING OR STACKING**



HEALTHY V

IS THE HEALTH OF YOUR



PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE



# WORKPLACE

## R WORKERS PUT AT RISK?

How noisy is **your** workshop?

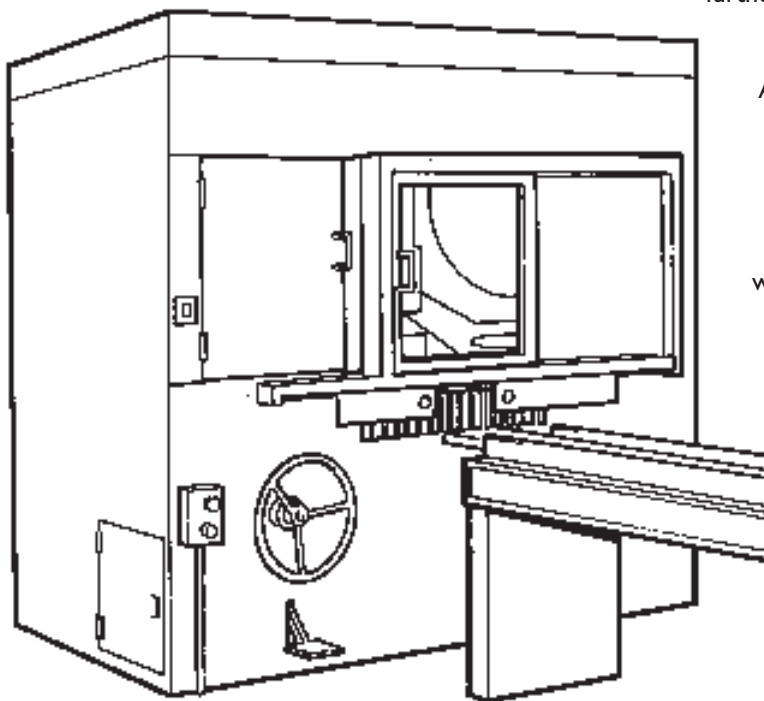
Where in your workshop is it necessary to wear ear defenders and how do **you** ensure that they are worn?

What is the significance of reducing the noise levels at source by 3 dB?

What steps have already been taken to reduce noise levels and what further steps are planned?

Are noise enclosures properly maintained and used?

Are **you** and your workers aware of the risks from noise?



CAN YOU HEAR YOURSELF THINK?



# FIRE SAFETY

## HOW DO YOU STOP FIRES STARTING AND PREVENT THEM FROM SPREADING?

Are flammable liquids used in **your** workshop and if so how much is allowed to be stored there?

What system do **you** maintain to prevent accumulation of sawdust, woodwaste and offcuts in your workplace? Does this system work?

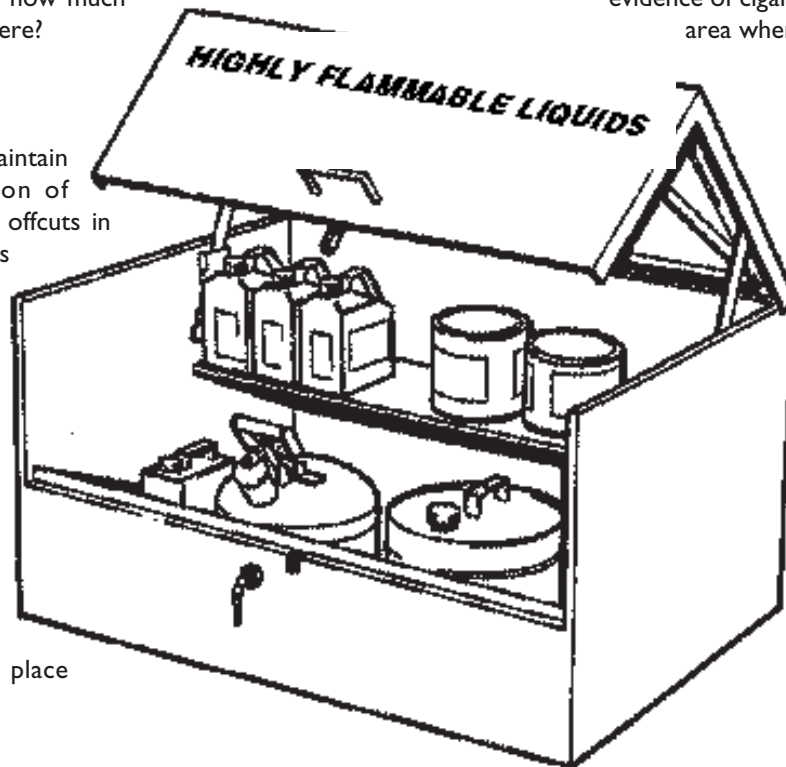
Where are the fire extinguishers and do **you** know how to use them?

Can **you** and your workers get to all the exits and then to a safe place without hindrance?

What would **you** do if you saw evidence of cigarette smoking in the area where flammable liquids are stored or used?

What do **you** do to ensure that lids are put back onto cans of flammable liquids when they are not in use?

Do **you** and your workers know what to do in the event of fire? When was the last fire drill?



**YOU CAN STOP THE PLACE GOING UP IN FLAMES**



# SAFE MACHINES

## HOW WELL GUARDED ARE THE MACHINES IN YOUR SHOP?

Would **you** challenge an experienced wood machinist for not using cutter guards or safety devices?

What safety devices are provided in **your** workshop and are they always used as necessary?

Do **you** stop a machine if it is in use without cutter guards? What about trial cutting?

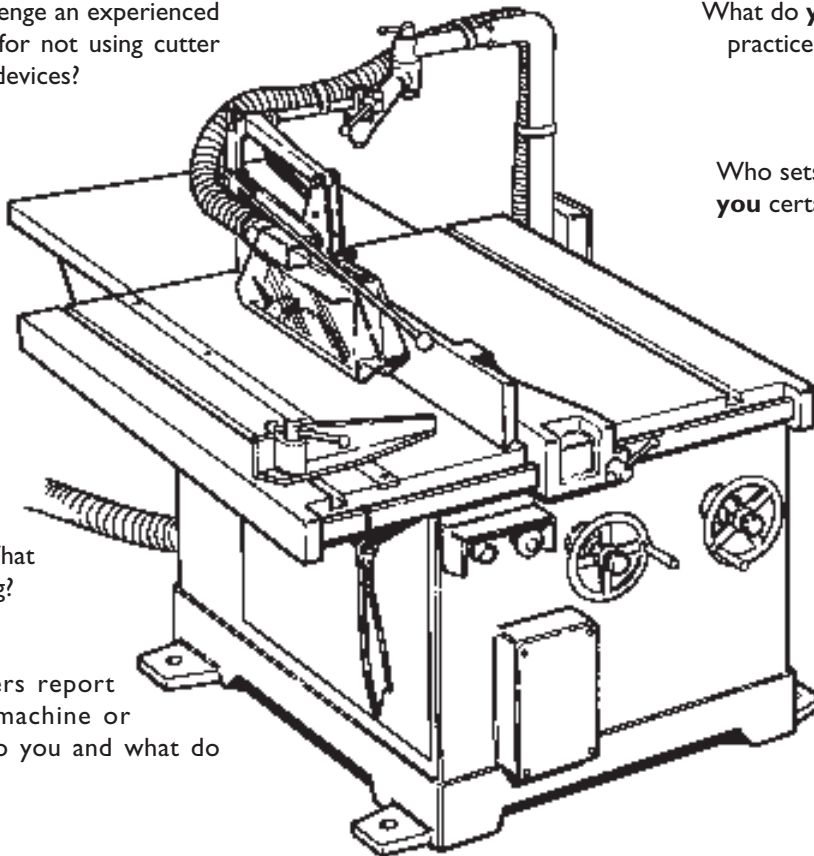
Do your workers report defects in the machine or safety devices to you and what do **you** do about it?

What do **you** mean by safe working practices and how do **you** ensure that they are adopted?

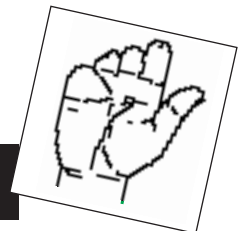
Who sets up the machines and are **you** certain that the correct safety procedures are followed?

Do **you** periodically inspect the machines and guards to ensure that they are properly maintained?

How often do **you** have to tell your machinists to properly adjust the guards? Do you have to tell them more than once in a day or shift?



**THE WOODWORKING INDUSTRY HAS THE WORST  
MACHINERY ACCIDENT RATE**



# ***BE HONEST***

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## **Are you as safety conscious as you thought you were?**

### ***So where do you go from here?***

Find out what your health and safety responsibilities are and their limits. How do these link with the responsibilities of operators and managers? Your job description and the company health and safety policy should help you do this.

You cannot supervise effectively for health and safety unless you have been properly trained.

Once you are sure what your health and safety responsibilities are, you will be able to supervise confidently. People working for you, regardless of their age or experience, will know that you are doing your job well and helping them to do theirs safely.

**LOOK** Identify the hazards in your workplace

**IDENTIFY** Write down your own action plan, take it to management and get it endorsed

**ACT** To put things right and supervise for safety

**REMEMBER** **You are a vital link in providing a safe workplace and you are expected to supervise for safety, as well as for quality and quantity of output. You need management support to help you to do this.**

## FURTHER READING

*Essentials of health and safety at work* (Fourth edition)  
HSE Books 2006 ISBN 0 7176 6179 2

*Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance* L22 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1626 6

*Safe use of woodworking machinery. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 as applied to woodworking machinery. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance* L114 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1630 4

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For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566  
Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com) or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.



**As a vital link you have the opportunity to put your ideas into practice.**

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 5 from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 6199 7.  
Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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