

## Metalworking Fluids and Respiratory Diseases in the Workplace

### New guidance for health risks associated with metalworking fluids

Failure to maintain controls of metalworking fluids has long been associated with work related health problems such as dermatitis and asthma in manufacturing industry. The Health and Safety Executive are creating greater awareness of the problems as part of their Disease Reduction Programme and are actively targeting respiratory diseases caused by inhalation of metalworking fluid mists including bronchitis and asthma. HSE have made the topic of work related asthma one of their main priorities for improvement. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/metalworking>.

HSE will be working in partnership with their stakeholders to identify the extent to which metalworking fluid guidance is being followed and are investigating how companies are dealing with the risks and protecting their workers, particularly in respect of respiratory illness. HSE have issued guidance on their website and a self assessment questionnaire for companies to complete. Many companies have already been targeted by HSE for evaluation.

### Key messages from HSE for managing health risks

There is a legal requirement to assess risks in the workplace and to reduce risk to be as low as reasonably practicable. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) requires exposure to metalworking fluids (MWFs) by inhalation, ingestion or skin contact to be prevented where reasonably practicable, or failing that, adequately controlled. For Metalworking Fluids, employers should:

- **Carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment**
- **Maintain fluid quality and control bacterial contamination of MWFs**
- **Prevent or control airborne mists and vapour**
- **Minimise skin exposure to fluids**
- **Carry out health surveillance for workers**

The new HSE guidance focuses more attention onto airborne mists particularly where bacteria can be present. Companies will need to take measures to achieve the necessary control and risk reduction including;

- **Installation of machine enclosures and local exhaust ventilation (LEV)**
- **Check bacterial contamination eg by dipslides in both metalworking and associated fluids such as wash chemicals, and act on results**
- **Carry out health surveillance by a competent qualified person**
- **Refer anyone suspected of having work related respiratory problems to an occupational health professional**
- **Take prompt action after any diagnosis of ill health to identify, prevent or control the likely cause**
- **Keep workers informed of all findings**

## How Houghton can help you reduce MWF health risks

HSE are demanding that MWF users should clearly demonstrate that they take every practicable step to control fluids, improve their condition and reduce exposure. At Houghton we are specialists both in manufacture of metalworking fluids and in their control and management with on site service and state of the art equipment.

Our modern Trafford Park UK laboratories provide a central resource for technical support including full analytical and microbiological facilities, while our Fluidcare programmes include packages of products, manpower service and equipment meeting managing all aspects of fluids use on customers sites.

We recognise that the new guidance on health risks will pose problems for users and we are able to use this unrivalled expertise in offering a package of services aimed at helping customers identify the risks and effective measures of prevention and control. Services available include;

### **Consultancy Support**

- **Risk assessments for use of MWFs in line with latest HSE guidance**
- **Advice on best practice for use of MWFs**
- **Training sessions for shop floor supervisors and operators. Includes shop floor testing methods, interpretation of results and remedial actions to improve fluids condition and control bacteria contamination**

### **Fluid Testing Services**

- **Fluids condition audits including bio-audits checking pH and bacteria contamination in water based MWFs.**
- **Fluid management software for record keeping with condition graphs and machine history features.**

### **Atmosphere Control**

- **Personal exposure monitoring for workers exposed to neat oil and emulsion mists**
- **Local exhaust ventilation efficiency testing for machines**
- **ScandMist air filtration equipment to remove oil mist and bacteria**

The package of services is available to all manufacturing engineers including both users and non-users of Houghton metalworking fluids. With our specialist experience and qualified technicians we can help your facility achieve a 'clean bill of health' in regard to metalworking fluids, benefiting both workers and productivity. Call our Customer Services department on 01245 125520 or contact us via our website [www.houghton.co.uk](http://www.houghton.co.uk) for more information or a quotation.

**For a free quotation please complete and return form by email or fax**

Your company name

Post code

Contact Name

Phone Number

Email address

Number of machines using soluble oil

Number of machines using neat oil

Number of washing machines

Number of induction hardening machines

Other machines please specify

Services required (Please tick)

Risk assessments	
Advice on best practice for use of MWFs	
MWF Training	
Fluids condition Bio audits	
Fluid management software	
LEV testing	
ScandMist from SPX air filtration	

Do you currently use Houghton products?

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