

Tree trimming/arboricultural industry

Noise and vibration

Do you use noisy equipment?

Do you use equipment that vibrates?

If you answer yes to either of these questions you may need to consider doing additional things to ensure the safety and health of workers and others when you are undertaking your business operations.

Noise and vibration are closely related but cause different health problems and injuries. Noise is an issue for most tree trimming work areas. Vibration can be either to the whole body (eg, from standing on a vibrating working platform) or to the hand/arm (eg, from using vibrating hand tools such as chainsaws).

In this industry it is practically impossible to eliminate noise from the work area, but there are some controls, other than personal protective equipment, that can reduce exposure, including:

- positioning noisy equipment away from other work areas
- minimising the number of people exposed and/or limiting the length of exposure to the noise source
- ensuring that equipment is regularly maintained – worn bearing and gears, poor lubrication, unbalanced rotating parts can all result in increased noise being produced
- provide a quiet rest area for food and rest breaks.

As a last resort, provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) (preferably ear muffs) to workers. You should ensure that:

- the PPE provides sufficient noise reduction levels – class two or three ear muffs generally provide sufficient protection, however the chipper operator should wear class four or five ear muffs to gain sufficient levels of protection
- workers are instructed on the correct use of the PPE
- workers are instructed to wear the PPE
- workers are trained in the maintenance and care of the PPE.

For reducing vibration:

- ensure that only tools with suitable internal vibration damping are used. Manufacturers should be utilised to install internal damping to tools which do not have it
- use external damping for places where hands contact the equipment (replaceable soft resilient-rubber coated handles, anti-vibration gloves etc)
- ensure that the damping methods are adequately and regularly maintained, and replaced when no longer functioning properly
- when buying new equipment purchase those with the lowest vibration ratings
- keep tools and equipment well maintained
- ensure that cutting equipment (ie, chainsaws) are kept sharp
- use rubber bushes that isolate the handlebars from the vibrating machine body on chainsaws and stump grinders. Replace these when worn out
- rotate workers between high vibration and low vibration tasks to reduce individual exposures



- use vibration reduction gloves when using vibrating equipment for lengthy periods.

For more information on noise and vibration and other workplace health and safety issues call 1300 369 915 or visit www.deir.qld.gov.au

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