



# HTIW

## HANDLING ADVICE

### **INTRODUCTION**

ECFIA recognises that there is a need to recommend good working practices to maintain control of fibrous dust concentrations in the workplace, not only for classified fibres but also for those that are not classified. Uncontrolled levels of fibrous dusts of any kind can lead to mechanical irritation and cause worker discomfort. Good hygiene practices and adequate engineered dust controls will improve the general conditions within the working environment and minimise the opportunity for both primary and secondary dust exposure, the latter resulting from a build up of dust in the workplace.

A number of countries within the EU have Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs) for the various types of fibrous dust; e.g. man made mineral fibres, which includes AES fibres, refractory ceramic fibres (ASW/RCF) and polycrystalline fibres. This means that there is a regulatory requirement to introduce controls that are sufficient to bring workplace concentrations below the relevant OELs.

## EXPOSURE CONTROL MEASURES

Control measures are generally a combination of engineered solutions and working practises to eliminate or reduce exposure. Selecting the right combination is very important and such measures will only work effectively if they are used correctly.

When looking at dust extraction equipment, the closer it is to the source of dust generation the more effective it will be. The least effective form of dust control is the use of respiratory protective equipment (RPE), whereby the dust generation is left uncontrolled and the worker wears respiratory protection to minimise their exposure.

It is generally recognised that personal protective equipment (PPE), including RPE, should be seen as a last resort and wherever practical other control measures should be implemented to minimise the opportunity for fibrous dust to enter the atmosphere where the individual is working.

The measures recommended by ECFIA can be applied to all fibre types; however, the level of control will differ depending on the fibre type, based on the classification of the material and the relevant OELs.

For example, when using ASW/RCF, as it is classified as a carcinogen (category 1b) within the EU the possibility of substituting with a less hazardous substance should be considered as a first step. If this is not possible then other control measures will need to be implemented to control the workplace dust.

Control measures include engineered controls to reduce dust emissions at source, and workplace practices to minimise handling and reduce secondary dust exposure. There is some overlap between these two approaches; for example, minimising the handling of fibrous materials during a process may require both engineering controls in terms of handling aids, and workplace practice controls in terms of operating procedures to ensure workers are using the equipment correctly.

For more detailed information see the ECFIA series of guidance documents which deal with specific types of dust control. These are available for free download on the ECFIA Guidance document website [www.guidance.ecfia.eu](http://www.guidance.ecfia.eu).