

HAZARD ANALYSIS

A workshop will contain a large number of hazards. The need is to locate each hazard and remove or minimize them to prevent harm. Often it is difficult to pinpoint hazards because we are so familiar with our surroundings that we don't notice a problem. Often a hazard will present itself upon a visitor to the workplace, they are not used to hopping over holes, ducking under a power leads or watching out for airlines. Based on this advice let's see if we can make our workshops safer.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Eyes, Ears, Lungs & Body. Eye protection in the form of safety glasses, goggles or face-shield should be worn at all times when there is a risk of flying woodchips or metal partials.

Ear protection is necessary for prolonged noise exceeding 85 decibels.

Lung protection is paramount for most woodworking applications especially sanding. Protect the body with a cover-all and the hands with gloves.

Walkways - Can you walk easily from the bench to the woodworking machinery and out to all the doors? Could you do this in the advent of an emergency like fire or in the total darkness of a power cut at night? If not then you need to work to clear safe walkways.

Manufacturer's Warnings – The woodworker's workshop is usually full of power tools and machinery. All machinery comes with a users guide, safety features, warnings and stickers pointing out the risks. Use these as a guide to note your machine hazards.

Hazards Identified – Consult the list of Hazards Identified for each machine at your location. Check that each hazard has been minimized as recommended. Consider whether there are new hazards due to the model or condition of your machines. Add these to the Hazards List with details of action to minimize these risks.

Electrical Hazards – Electricity can kill in seconds and some of our machines are older than our children. Most modern machines are 2-pin and double insulated, however if you cut the cord they are electric chairs to punish to foolish. Have all your appliances checked regularly by a qualified electrician, use an isolating transformer or RCD (Residual Current Device) for all electrical equipment or better still have your shed hard wired to an RCD that controls to every electrical plug.

Shelves and storage areas – In many sheds, storage areas are a hazard. Unevenly stacked equipment, tripping hazards on the floor, heavy items up high, unstable and loose materials balanced on top of others waiting for a nudge to fall. Spend some time in your storage areas and stack and box them correctly and neatly.

Tools and Equipment – The best place for unused tools and equipment is on a shadow-board. You know what you have got and you know what is missing.

Hazardous Materials – Store all flammables in a flameproof cabinet. Wood-workers collect a number of flammable and caustic substances to rub on their wood. Collect them all into one place near the door, buy or construct a metal cabinet (lockable if you have youngsters) and store them all in it.

Hazard List – keep the list of the hazards in your workplace in a prominent position. List the risks and action needed to minimize those risks. Persons coming to use your equipment need to read and understand all parts of your hazards list and then sign a Health and Safety Declaration.

When the hazards have not been avoided:

First Aid Kit – you need a well-stocked and updated first aid kit. Details of a recommended kit are in a separate First Aid Kit Lists file. Place a bold label beside your first aid kit with the street address for your location so that an ambulance using GPS navigation can find you.

Fire Equipment – If there is no building-wide sprinkler system have at least one fire extinguisher in a very accessible place in your workshop.

Emergency Contact – If there is a telephone in the room place a clear and bold list emergency numbers beside that phone. Alternatively ensure that at least one person in the room has a cellphone.