

WOOD DUST EXPOSURES IN BC PULP MILLS AND POTENTIAL CONTROL MEASURES

FOREST INDUSTRY HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM

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The *Forest Industry Health Research Program (FIHRP)* has completed an analysis of personal wood dust sampling data from several BC Pulp Mills. A report is now available to members titled "**Wood Dust Exposures in BC Pulp Mills and Potential Control Measures**". To request a copy, contact **Agi Lee** at the Pulp and Paper Employee Relations Forum at (604) 777-1533, send a fax to (604) 777-1567 or email alee@paperforum.com. Non-members of the Forum may be charged for the reports.

An analysis of 145 personal wood dust sampling data collected from seven BC pulp mills was conducted to highlight trends in exposure and to identify high-risk job tasks. The results would provide mills with a priority list for further evaluation of wood dust exposures by ranking the jobs measured according to average exposure levels. The study also investigated cost-effective control measures to minimize wood dust exposure.

Average exposure levels for all jobs sampled were less than 2 mg/m³, which is less than the current 5 mg/m³ WCB 8-hour permissible concentration (PC) for wood dust (non-allergenic) and the proposed "action level" (1/2 of the PC or 2.5 mg/m³), however, individual measurements did exceed the action level and PC for Wood/Chip Handling Workers and Carpenters.

Wood/Chip Handling Workers and Carpenters were considered the highest priorities for evaluation by virtue of having the highest average exposures and upper 95% confidence limits. Wood/Chip Transfer Machine Drivers and Wood/Chip Storage Workers had lower average exposures and upper 95% confidence limits, and therefore were considered lower priorities.

Data for other job categories (Wood Handling/Cut-off Saw Workers, Chippermill Operators, Digester Worker Helpers, Millwrights and Warehouse Workers) were only collected at one mill, and therefore estimates of exposure levels were not considered representative of other mills and conclusions could not be drawn.

Control options for reducing wood dust exposure were also reviewed. These options included a variety of engineering and administrative controls, as well as personal protective equipment.