

From: HSE ebulletin service <hse@public.govdelivery.com>
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HSE ebulletin

HSE ebulletin - metalworking inspections: looking after your metalworking fluid

Issued: 21 November 2023

HSE will be inspecting manufacturing businesses that use metalworking fluids or 'white water' in their machining processes until March.

Not completing regular fluid quality checks is one of the common reasons that manufacturing companies, particularly smaller businesses, fail compliance.

Maintenance of fluid quality is key to controlling risk

Water-mix metalworking fluid deteriorates over time and can become contaminated with harmful bacteria and other contaminants.

Irritated skin and lung problems don't have to be associated with working with metalworking fluid if you take the right precautions. Maintaining fluid quality also improves machine performance and quality of machined components.

Fluid quality checks are simple to carry out with some basic equipment - visual and odour checks should be done daily and concentration, pH and dipslides should be weekly. If results are outside of recommended levels, you should take corrective action.

Basic equipment needed

- Dipslides (bacteria)
- Incubator
- pH test strips (or electronic pH meter)
- Refractometer (concentration)

Who should do the fluid quality checks?

Whilst the requirement to have appropriate fluid quality checks in place is with the user of the metalworking fluids, the checks themselves can be carried out by users, the supplier, another third party, or a combination.

The important thing is that the checks are carried out at the recommended frequencies and corrective action taken if the results are outside recommended levels. If the checks are being carried out by a combination of parties, it needs to be clear who is undertaking which checks to ensure none get missed.

Guidance and downloads

For explanations of the checks required and frequency, and technical advice on the methods and information on actions to take based on the results:

- visit our website to download [HSE COSHH MW5: Managing fluid quality](#)
- view the [Good Practice Guide for Safe Handling and Disposal of Metalworking Fluids \(.pdf\)](#)
- record results [download the printout checklist \(.pdf\)](#)
- print and [display the poster \(.pdf\)](#) as a reminder of what's needed and when
- watch the practical series of [UKLA videos](#) with easy-to-follow demonstrations

Local exhaust ventilation (LEV)

LEV should be fitted to Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines where operators are exposed to metalworking fluid mist. It is the key control measure to reduce inhalation exposure.

For more details, visit our website to download [HSE COSHH MW1: CNC machining](#).

Health surveillance

Where there is exposure to fluid or mist, it is a legal requirement to carry out health surveillance even when preventative controls are in place.

Find out more about [occupational health and health surveillance schemes](#).

Latest news

Five prominent organisations call on industries using metalworking fluids to act safely

The United Kingdom Lubricants Association Metalworking Fluid Product Stewardship Group is working with BOHS, Make UK, MTA and SHEP to call on industry to use metalworking fluids safely.

In an open letter to industry, they say that looking after your metalworking fluids will benefit your workshop, employees, machining performance and reduce costs.

[Read and share the open letter \(.pdf\)](#)

HSE Working Minds campaign launches new free online learning for employers

To help employers prevent stress and support good mental health, a free interactive tool has been developed that brings HSE's Working Minds campaign principles to life.

The Working Minds campaign promotes the principles of risk assessment, with a focus on 5 steps: reach out, recognise, respond, reflect, make it routine.

The new bitesize online learning is made up of 6 short modules that guide you step by step, with helpful tools and practical resources.

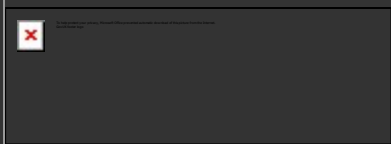
You'll come away with an understanding of what the law requires of employers and what you need to do to be compliant.

[Register and get started today](#)

More about the metalworking fluids inspection campaign

Visit our campaign website for [more information and resources](#).

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