

No. 419/2020

11 August 2020

Our Ref: P5/20

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

HSE To Carry Out Welding Inspections To Check on Compliance With New Welding Fumes Controls Designed To Reduce Lung Cancer Risks:

The HSE has issued a reminder to all employers that they must protect their workers' health by controlling the risks from welding fumes.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched a programme of inspections in February this year which was interrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic. However, the intention now is to continue the programme as a key objective aimed at improving and maintaining health and safety standards and the HSE Field Operations Inspectors will review health and safety standards across the country, visiting businesses and encouraging employers to visit the '**HSE Revised Guidance Website Pages**' to remind themselves of the changes to control standards.

HSE has stated that to protect workers' health, employers must ensure they have adequate controls in place to avoid or reduce exposure to welding fumes. Employers should be using local exhaust ventilation where effective and provide suitable respiratory protective equipment where necessary to protect workers from inhaling fumes.

The HSE inspections follow a safety alert that was issued last year after new evidence showed that exposure to mild steel welding fumes can cause cancer and the HSE updated its guidance to reflect this.

Scientific evidence from the International Agency for Research on Cancer shows that exposure to mild steel welding fumes can cause lung cancer and possibly kidney cancer in humans.

The HSE has stated that employers and workers must know the risk. Welding work must be planned and the right controls used when welding activity is carried out. If they are not used, the HSE will use enforcement action against offenders to bring about improvements.

The HSE added that it is their mission that all workers are protected and are not made ill or killed by their work. Everyone should be able to leave work and go home healthy and safe. By law employers must protect their workers by controlling the health risks from welding fumes. This applies to specialist welders and workers who do some welding, no matter how small the amount.

A number of CWU members employed in various engineering functions use welding equipment, to which the new guidance is very relevant and applicable to their employers.

The HSE Welding Fumes Guidance is attached (with links to further detailed information).

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer