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Media Release

Regulatory relief for wood processing and manufacturing welcomed

The announcement today by the Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Brooke van Velden on reviewing the risks associated with Worker Exposure Standards for wood dust and machine guarding is welcomed by the Wood Products and Manufacturing Association (WPMA).

"The current approach to workplace safety regulations in these areas has been described by WPMA members as inconsistent and therefore unclear, said Mark Ross, WPMA Chief Executive. "Some businesses have invested tens of thousands of dollars in equipment and controls but still struggle to comply with standards that don't align with international benchmarks or practical realities, with one participant saying the standards are 'an overreaction to risk which will cripple the industry'."

"Wood processing businesses have expressed frustration that the soft wood dust standard is impractical and not based on realistic risk assessments. They are wanting a system that is both protective and practical, and the changes announced by the Minister aim to provide that", said Ross.

"When our wood processing businesses can focus on managing genuine risks rather than navigating complex and sometimes contradictory regulations, they can operate more efficiently, continue to keep their people safe, and contribute more effectively to our regional economy."

The Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association will be actively engaging with the consultation process and encourages members to participate and share their experiences. As the Minister states, simplifying machine guarding rules and reviewing the Workplace Exposure Standards will make it easier for people to do the right thing, without compromising safety. See: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/regulatory-relief-manufacturing-sector>

Media Contact

Mark Ross, Chief Executive
E: mark@wpma.org.nz
M: 027 442 9965

WPMA – who we are:

WPMA is an industry membership association representing companies involved in the wider wood processing and manufacturing industries, including sawn timber, pulp and paper, manufactured and engineered wood products, along with bio-forest products. Our vision champions wood processing and manufacturing as the core to New Zealand's economic growth, regional development, emissions reduction, and a sustainable environment.