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PRESS RELEASE

Wood Processors Welcome Retention of Existing Softwood Dust Exposure Levels

The Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association of New Zealand (WPMA) has welcomed WorkSafe New Zealand's confirmation that the Workplace Exposure Standard (WES) for softwood dust will remain at its current level of 2 mg/m³.

The decision follows a recent consultation on proposed WES values for softwood dust, hardwood dust, flour dust and welding fumes. As part of the outcome, WorkSafe has also confirmed that the WES for hardwood dust will increase from 0.5 mg/m³ to 1 mg/m³, and that it no longer intends to combine the softwood and hardwood dust exposure standards in the future.

WPMA Chief Executive Mark Ross said the decision reflects a practical and evidence-based approach that considers the realities faced by New Zealand softwood (Radiata Pine) manufacturers and wood processors.

Alongside confirming the revised WES values, WorkSafe has released a range of new plain-language resources to help businesses better understand workplace exposure standards and manage risks associated with harmful airborne substances. The resources include educational videos, practical case studies, and guidance on working with occupational hygienists.

These resources are available on the WorkSafe website at:
<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/monitoring/>

Workplace Exposure Standards are guideline values used to help assess worker exposure to airborne substances such as dusts and fumes. They are not mandatory limits or regulatory targets. Businesses should continue to focus on eliminating exposure wherever possible, or minimising exposure so far as is reasonably practicable using effective controls.

Ross said the outcome demonstrates the value of constructive engagement between industry and regulators.

"We thank Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Brooke van Velden and the WorkSafe team for listening to industry concerns and taking a common-sense approach to setting workplace exposure standards for softwood dust."

"This outcome provides greater certainty for businesses while maintaining a strong focus on worker health and safety."

Who we are

The Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association of NZ (WPMA) is a national,

voluntary industry body representing companies that convert harvested logs into finished wood products such as sawn timber, pulp, panels, laminated products, mouldings, engineered wood, and emerging bio-forest product solutions. WPMA supports a sector employing more than 38,000 direct staff, mostly in the regions. Our members export over \$3.2 billion in value added wood products and generate around \$2 billion in domestic wood sales each year.

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