



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

Guidance

Safety Bulletin 15: HSE Guidance welding fume 2019

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HSE Safety Alert: Change in enforcement for mild Steel welding fume

Summary of issue

The HSE issued a safety alert to raise awareness of the health dangers from exposure to welding fume.

New scientific evidence, from the International Agency for Research on Cancer, advises that exposure to mild steel welding fume can cause lung cancer and possibly kidney cancer in humans. There has been endorsement and reclassification of mild steel welding fume as a human carcinogen.

Welding activities must be carried out in ventilated areas and if exposure controls are not adequate, suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE) should be worn to minimise the risk from the residual fume.

Actions to take

To control the risk suitable engineering controls for all welding activities indoors will be required e.g. Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV). Where (LEV) does not adequately control exposure, adequate and suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE) should be provided.

Welding should not be undertaken without suitable exposure control measures, as there is no known level of safe exposure. This is applicable to indoors and outdoors.

Risk assessments should reflect the change in the expected control measures.

Legal requirements

- Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997, as amended
- Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) (Carcinogens and Mutagens) Regulations 2007 and MGN 356.

Further information

[The Code of Safe Working Practice for Seafarers \(COSWP\) 2019](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-safe-working-practices-for-merchant-seafarers-2019) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-safe-working-practices-for-merchant-seafarers-2019>) amendment will reflect these changes.

[Health and Safety Executive - STSU1 - 2019](https://www.hse.gov.uk/safetybulletins/mild-steel-welding-fume.htm#utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=welding-alert&utm_content=ebul-link-2) (https://www.hse.gov.uk/safetybulletins/mild-steel-welding-fume.htm#utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=welding-alert&utm_content=ebul-link-2)

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