

Implementation of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) for welding operations

BACKGROUND

There is new scientific evidence from the International Agency for Research on Cancer that exposure to mild steel welding fume can cause lung cancer and possibly kidney cancer in humans. The Workplace Health Expert Committee has endorsed the reclassification of mild steel welding fume as a human carcinogen.

In view of the above, there has been a strengthening of HSE's enforcement expectation for all welding fume, including mild steel welding because general ventilation does not achieve the necessary control.

HSE has outlined the enforcement expectations for all welding fume in its bulletin STSU1 – 2019 (issued Feb, 2019). Where LEV alone does not adequately control exposure, it should be supplemented by adequate and suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE) to protect against the residual fume. Additionally, RPE should be provided for welding outdoors as well.

ACTION

As part of our Built to Last transformation programme, we are relentlessly pursuing our Zero Harm strategy by ensuring there is no injury, ill health or incident caused by our work activities.

We have enforced mandatory use of full face air-line RPE for all welding activities (irrespective of duration) on both of our Angerstein and Hithergreen projects. By treating health as importantly as we treat safety, we are endeavouring to improve the lives of all of our employees, both now and for years to come.

