

Abrasive Wheels — Implementation Guide

Read this first. Everything else in the pack follows this order.

Why this pack exists

The Abrasive Wheels Regulations 1970 were REVOKED. Abrasive wheels are now governed by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), supported by HSE guidance HSG17 Safety in the use of abrasive wheels. The old prescriptive 'appointed person' structure is gone. In its place is a competence requirement: anyone who selects, mounts or uses an abrasive wheel must be competent to do so, and that competence must be DEMONSTRABLE. This pack exists to make it demonstrable.

Most firms have people using angle grinders, cut-off saws and bench grinders every day, and nothing written down at all. A certificate from an online course is not enough on its own, because it evidences awareness and nothing else. What PUWER asks for is that the person is competent for the specific equipment they use, and that you can show it.

What the law actually requires

Requirement	Where it comes from	What it means here
Equipment suitable for the job	PUWER reg 4	Right wheel for the material and the machine. Cutting discs are not grinding wheels.
Maintained in efficient working order	PUWER reg 5	Guards intact, spindle sound, no defects. Recorded.
Inspected where safety depends on it	PUWER reg 6	Pre-use checks and periodic inspection, with a record. See AW-03.
Adequate training and information	PUWER reg 9	Not just awareness. Specific to the equipment. See AW-04 to AW-07.
Guarding of dangerous parts	PUWER reg 11	Wheel guards correctly fitted and adjusted.
Protection from specific hazards	PUWER reg 12	Ejected fragments, sparks, wheel burst.
Control of dust	COSHH 2002	Silica from concrete and stone. See AW-01.
Control of vibration	Vibration at Work Regs 2005	Grinders are high vibration tools.
Control of noise	Noise at Work Regs 2005	Cutting and grinding routinely exceed the action values.
Suitable eye protection	PPE at Work Regs 1992 as amended	BS EN 166. Impact rated.

The order to do it in

1. Complete the risk assessment (AW-01) for your own site. Do not just sign the template. Walk the workshop with it and delete what does not apply.
2. Adopt the safe system of work (AW-02) and put a copy where the wheels are used.
3. Start the inspection regime (AW-03). Pre-use checks from day one, periodic inspection booked.

4. Deliver the training (AW-04) to everybody who uses or mounts a wheel. It is designed to be delivered by your own supervisor, in about ninety minutes.
5. Test knowledge (AW-05). Candidate paper blank, answers handwritten. Mark it with AW-05a.
6. Assess practically (AW-06) on your own machines. This is the part an online course cannot do.
7. Authorise in writing (AW-07). This is the document most firms are missing and the one an inspector asks for.
8. Run the toolbox talk (AW-08) and keep the attendance sheet.
9. Log everybody on the register (AW-09) and diary the refreshers.

Realistically this is half a day of admin and about ninety minutes per person. Then it runs on the register.

Who needs to be trained

Three groups, and firms routinely miss the second one.

- **Users.** Anybody who operates an angle grinder, cut-off saw, bench or pedestal grinder, or die grinder.
- **Mounters.** Anybody who changes or mounts a wheel. This is a distinct competence and it is where wheel bursts come from. A person can be authorised to use but not to mount.
- **Selectors.** Whoever buys or issues wheels. Wrong wheel, wrong speed rating, wrong machine.

Refresher interval

There is no legally fixed interval. HSE expects refresher training at a frequency justified by risk. Common practice for abrasive wheels is **three years**, and sooner if there is an incident, a near miss, new equipment, a change of process, or any sign the person has drifted from the safe system. AW-09 tracks it.

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