This tool box talk will address the potential risks of working with vibrating tools, and what you can do to minimise those risks.
You are at risk of hand arm vibration syndrome, HAVs, if you regularly use high vibration hand tools, such as:

- Drills
- Jack hammers
- Wacker plates and so on

Whole body vibration could be associated with driving certain types of construction vehicles for long periods of time.
So why should you worry?
HAVS is preventable, but once the damage is done it is permanent. HAVS is serious and disabling. Any part of your body can be affected by vibration but some of the most common parts to be affected include:

- Fingers
- Arms
- Hands
- Backs

HAVS is the generic terms used to describe a variety of injuries incurred to the hands and arms caused through excessive exposure to vibrating tools.

It was previously known vibration white finger which describes the main symptom displayed in sufferers. The blanching appearance in the fingers and hands is created by poor blood circulation which destroys blood vessels and tissue.

It is also known as Secondary Raynaud's Syndrome which if not detected in the early stages permanently impairs blood circulation in the fingers and can lead to gangrene in the more serious stages, as pictured here, and possible amputation of fingers.

Nerve entrapment or Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a condition associated with HAVS and involves the nerve that travels down the arm into the hand, the median nerve, becoming compressed and subsequently becomes squeezed as it passes through the narrow path (or tunnel) at the wrist. The pressure on the wrist causes fingers and the thumb to feel tingly and numb. They may even feel paralysed and incapable of movement.

The risk increases when you regularly use high vibration hand tools. If you get cold or wet, as this reduces body temperature so adding to the problem.

If you have to grip tightly or if tools are awkward to use. Also if equipment is not well maintained, for example if you use a drill with a blunt bit it will take you longer to do the job and will increase the vibration levels so by maintaining equipment will help to speed up the job and reduce the risk.
The warning signs includes:

- Pins and needles
- Numbness in your fingers, particularly at the end of the day

You may:

- Have problems picking things, like nails, up especially in cold weather
- Find that the tips of your fingers go white as shown in this photo

Or when you come into a warm room after being out in the cold your hands may go red and feel painful
To help prevent problems you should tell your supervisor if equipment is faulty. Faults with equipment often result in greater levels of vibration, so get them fixed.

You should:

• Take regular breaks, or rotate tasks, if the work is repetitive
• Use low vibration tools wherever possible

You could use a Traffic Light System. This is one way some hire companies and tool manufacturers are getting across the message of high vibratory equipment, but always be cautious when using tools or equipment which use this system.

As a guideline it suggests the following:

• Red – maximum use 30 minutes in 8 hours
• Amber - 60 – 120 minutes in 8 hours
• Green - can be used for up to 8 hours a day

Other things that can be done include:

• Trying to keep the hands and body warm by wearing gloves and weatherproof clothing
• Warming up before starting the job
• Keeping warm when you take breaks
• Massaging your hands and fingers

Also think about where you store tools, if they are kept in a metal container overnight and have metal handles, as soon as you touch the handles you reduce your body temperature and increase the risk.
When it come to health checks, there is what is called a tiered system for checking for HAVS. You will initially be asked to complete a questionnaire, and then on a yearly basis.

This asks for any symptoms you may have. If you need help with it please ask.

If you have any symptoms, like whiteness or numbness of any fingers you should be checked by a nurse or doctor.

If you do notice your fingers going white after using vibrating tools, if possible capture a photo on your mobile phone to show the nurse or doctor.

You should though be routinely checked by a nurse or Doctor every three years this is tier 3, Tier 4 is the assessment made by a doctor to make the diagnosis.
Whole body vibration is the term given to describe vibration that affects the whole body, not just the hands.

It is transmitted through the seat or feet of employees who drive mobile machines, or other work vehicles, over rough and uneven surfaces as a main part of their job. Large shocks and jolts may cause health risks including back-pain.

Therefore driving plant for long periods of time, that has poor suspension, is poorly maintained and does not have a good seat could result in whole body vibration.

However back pain is also known to be caused by poor posture and lifting.
Prolonged exposure to whole body vibration can lead to considerable back pain.

Although back pain is more commonly caused by:

- Poor design or adjustment of seating or controls
- Poor driver posture
- Long periods in seat
- Manual handling of loads
- Awkward access to or jumping from cab
- Non-occupational causes

Back problems can be caused by awkward access to or jumping from the cab, or from other non-work related causes.

Also of course poor manual handling of loads can cause back pain.
To minimise any risks from whole body vibration, the operator should avoid rough terrain, perhaps drive a slower, different route, to avoid the rough ground.

Driver skill should be addressed, perhaps training is required, the suspension and seat adjustments should be looked at.

If necessary a more suitable vehicle should be used, one that is more suited to the terrain and task with suitable seat and ergonomics of the cab.

Tyre pressure, suspensions and, seats should be regularly maintained.

Consider safer site design and maintenance of roadways and operating surfaces.
As there is no medical condition relating specifically to whole body vibration, any symptoms of back pain should though be monitored by an annual questionnaire, and any symptoms reported
If you have any questions speak to your Manager, you can also phone CBH on 0845 873 7726 for impartial confidential advice

If you have any symptoms though please make an appointment to see your GP

Thank you for listening