# The Dangers of Wood Dust

*Compiled from "Is it Safe" by the Construction, Forestry, Mining & Energy Union, National Safety Construction Division (1993)*

Wood dust is produced when timber is being worked such as in chipping, sawing, turning, drilling and sanding. Sanding is by far the most dangerous as the particles are so fine that a lot of masks do not entirely filter the particles, and, as a result, pass into our nasal cavities, sinuses and lungs.

Hardwoods in general such as beech, oak and mahogany and native hardwoods (eucalypts) generate fine particles of dust and this has a prime link with nasal cancers. Softwood timbers from coniferous trees such as pine, are less of a risk. Medium density fibreboard (MDF) poses another problem due to the bonding agent and should be treated the same as hardwood. A properly designed and maintained exhaust system is the best method of collecting the dust and is the ideal way. However if this is not practical, dust respirators should be used whenever you are exposed to dust, not only when you are actually processing your work. The following list of some timbers and the effects that they might have should be kept in the workshop.

| NAME | POSSIBLE HEALTH HAZARD |
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| **Alpine Ash** *Eucalyptus delegatensis* | Irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **Blackbean** *Castanospermum australe* | Irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **Blackwood** *Acacia melanoxylon* | Dermatitis, asthma, irritation of nose & throat |
| **Coolibah** *Eucalyptus microtheca* | Dermatitis |
| **Crows Ash** *Flindersia australia* | Dermatitis |
| **Douglas Fir (Oregon)** *Pseudotsuga menziesii* | Dermatitis, nasal cancer, irritation to eyes & throat |
| **Ebony** *Diospyros* spp. | Irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **European Beech** | Nasal cancer, dermatitis |

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| *Fagus sylvatica* | |
| **European Boxwood** *Buxus sempervirens* | Irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **European Walnut** *Juglans regia* | Nasal cancer, irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **European Elm** *Ulmus* spp. | Nasal cancer, irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **Grey Box** *Eucalyptus microcarpa* | Eczema, irritation to nose & throat |
| **Jarrah** *Eucalyptus marginata* | Irritation to nose & throat |
| **Meranti** *Shorea* spp. | Irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **Messmate** Eucalyptus obliqua | Asthma, irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis |
| **Miva Mahogany** *Dysoxylum muelleri* | Congested lungs, irritation to nose, eyes & throat, dermatitis headache, nose bleeding & loss of appetite |
| **Mountain Ash** *Eucalyptus regnans* | Irritation to nose, eyes & throat |
| **Mulga** *Acacia aneura* | Headaches, irritation to nose eyes & throat, vomiting |
| **Port Orford Cedar** *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* | Dermatitis, violent ear ache giddiness, stomach cramps, bronchitis, irritation of mucous membranes |
| **Redwood** *Sequoia sempervirens* | Dermatitis & asthma |
| **Rimu** *Dacrydium cupressinum* | Irritation to eyes & nose |
| **South American Cedar** *Cedrela* spp. | Dermatitis, asthma, nasal cancer, irritation to nose & throat. Sap may cause blistering of skin and inflamation of eyelids |
| **Spotted Gum** *Eucalyptus maculata* | Dermatitis |
| **Teak** *Tectona grandis* | Dermatitis, conjunctivitis, oversensitivity to light, swelling of the scrotum, irritation to nose & throat, nausea |
| **Western Red Cedar** *Thuga plicata* | Asthma, dermatitis, nasal cancer, nausea, rhinitis, nosebleeding, giddiness, stomach pain |
| **White Cedar** *Melia azedarach* | Dermatitis |

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| **White Baltic**<br>*Picea abies* | Asthma, skin irritation |
| **White Cypress Pine**<br>*Callitris glauca* | Dermatitis, swelling eyelids, asthma, irritation of nose & throat, nasal cancer, furuncilosis |
| **Yellow Gum**<br>*Eucalyptus leucoxylon* | Irritation of nose & throat |

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