

## Granulometric characterization of Arctic driftwood sawdust from frame sawing process

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### ABSTRACT

Arctic driftwood can be used as an alternative source of wood as construction timber and furniture material, especially in Iceland and Greenland. The use of Arctic driftwood can help in the fight against climate change, by developing land reforestation processes and reducing the volume harvested wood from forests and sustainability of harvesting processes. In this paper the results of an analysis of the effect of long-term residence of pine (*Pinus sylvestris* L.) and larch wood (*Larix sibirica* L.) stay in Arctic ice and seawater on the granulation of wood sawdust and the distribution of fine wood dust particles during the frame sawing process are presented. The distribution of wood chips and dust was analysed using sieve and laser diffraction methods. The results confirmed that Arctic driftwood, compared to normal wood for both analysed species, generate slightly more fine wood dust particles during the frame sawing process, which can be harmful to human health. However, these differences are not significant, indicating that the same dust extraction systems can be used for both sawing processes.

### 1. Introduction

Arctic driftwood has been reaching the coasts of Iceland and Greenland for centuries. The inhabitants of these regions used this material in different ways depending on current need, mainly: building houses, churches, boats or bridges (Mooney 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Guðmundsdóttir, 2022). Driftwood reaches the coast of Iceland and Greenland mainly from the boreal forests of northern Europe and the Russian part of Asia (Hellmann et al., 2013, 2015, 2017), and sometimes also from Alaska or northern Canada (Hellmann et al., 2017). This wood, as a result of the natural riverbank erosion and industrial wood logging,

massive wood deposits enter to Arctic Ocean through the large boreal river systems (Kolár et al. 2022). Then, driftwood is carried down the sea ice by surface sea currents (Eggertsson, 1993). Today, this wood is not used widely as it was before. The availability of timber from other provenances of the world, has meant that driftwood in Iceland and Greenland is today mainly used for fuel, fence posts and wood carving. However, the climate change that is occurring, and the need to fight to reduce and/or slow it down, suggests that the use of driftwood would allow for a reduction in forest harvesting. Driftwood is a valuable construction and firewood source, and a sustainable timber management process indicated the need to use such a natural resource, which would

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**Fig. 1.** The investigated driftwood: (a) the Arctic driftwood on the coast of North Iceland; (b) derived experimental samples: WOOD 1 – samples Siberian larch, WOOD 2 and 3 – samples Scots pine.

**Table 1**  
Selected properties of examined wood samples (average values with standard deviations in parentheses).

Sample name	Sample code	Raw density	Oven-dry density	Moisture content
		$\rho$ kg m <sup>-3</sup>	$\rho_{od}$ kg m <sup>-3</sup>	MC %
Driftwood	DL	562.2 (15.1)	506.3 (14.1)	11.05 (0.13)
Larch	L	694.9 (31.5)	625.08 (24.3)	11.17 (0.23)
Driftwood Pine	DP	414.5 (7.0)	372.5 (6.3)	11.26 (0.02)
Pine	P	460.25 (8.9)	416.1 (8.2)	10.6 (0.3)

reduce the cost of transporting timber from other parts of the world and thus reduce pollution from the use of transport. The use of driftwood should also assist in the reforestation of land, which can be very beneficial in the fight against accelerating climate change.

Chuchala et al. (2021) showed stronger machinability properties of larch driftwood in relation to normal larch wood. Therefore, it can be assumed that the natural modification of wood during its long-term stay in ice and seawater may cause significant changes in wood, leading to the formation of more fine dusts during processing, which are hazardous

**Table 2**  
Technical parameters of sash-gang saw and its saw blade used in the experimental cuttings.

Parameter	Symbol	Value	Unit
<b>machine parameters</b>			
number of strokes of saw frame per min	$n_F$	685	spm
saw frame stroke	$H_F$	162	mm
number of saws in the gang	$m$	5	–
average cutting speed	$v_c$	3.69	m·s <sup>-1</sup>
feed speed	slow	$v_{f1}$	0.99 m·min <sup>-1</sup>
	fast	$v_{f2}$	1.45 m·min <sup>-1</sup>
feed per tooth	slow	$f_{z1}$	0.116 mm
	fast	$f_{z2}$	0.171 mm
<b>tool parameters</b>			
the sharp saw blades with stellite tipped teeth	–	–	–
overall set (kerf width)	$S_t$	2	mm
saw blade thickness	$s$	0.9	mm
free length of the saw blade	$L_0$	318	mm
blade width	$b$	30	mm
tooth pitch	$t_p$	13	mm
tool side rake angle	$\gamma_f$	9	°
tool side clearance	$\alpha_f$	14	°
tension stresses of saws in the gang	$\sigma_N$	300	MPa

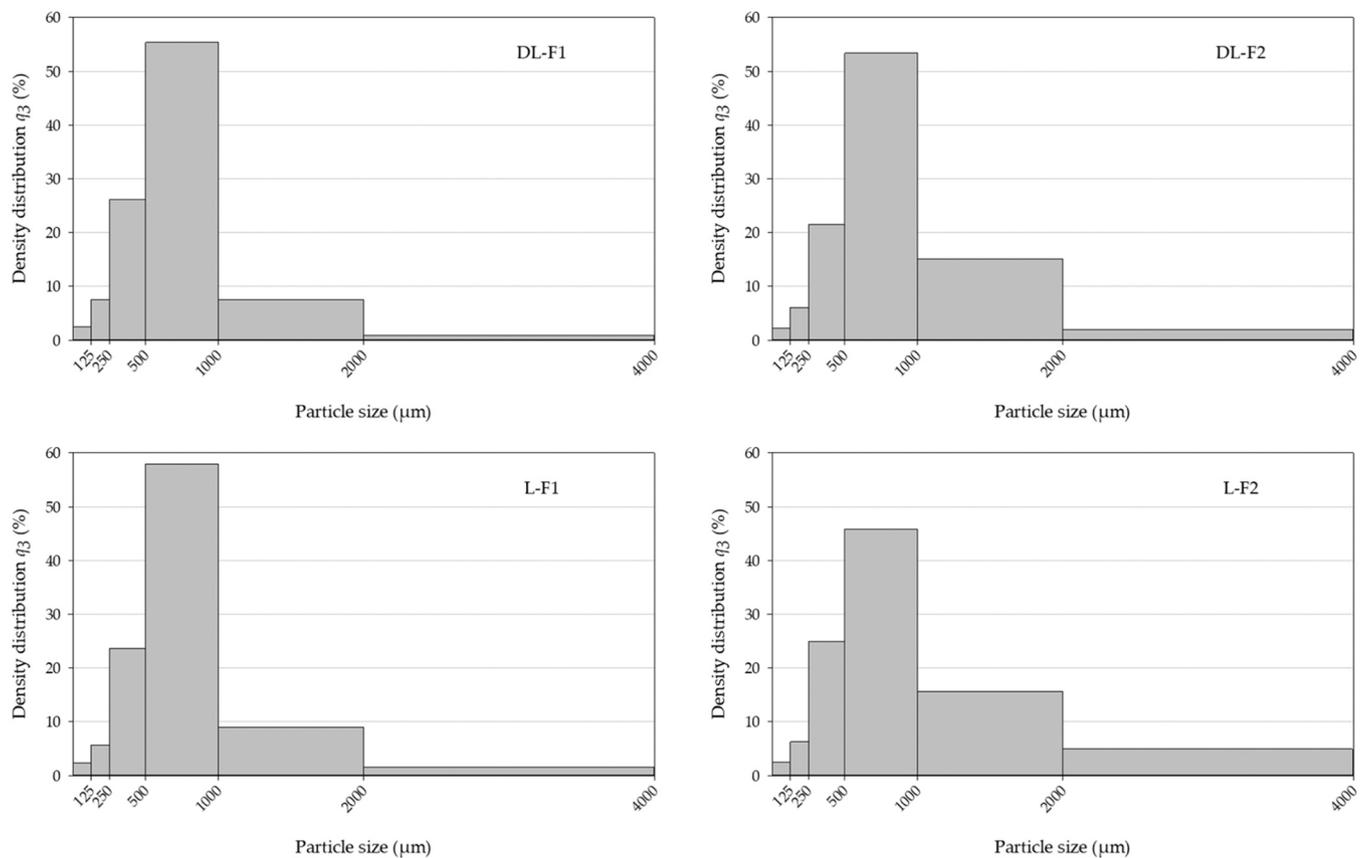


Fig. 2. Particle size distributions of larch wood dust – by sieve analysis method in a function of both drifting and normal wood and feed per tooth.

to the health of machine tool operators (Oberdörster et al., 2005; Jacobsen et al., 2010; IARC, 2012). Previous studies have shown that different treatment processes induce changes in the machinability properties (cutting forces and cutting power), mechanical properties and the granulometric composition of dust and chips produced during wood machining operations. One of the basic wood treatments in the manufacturing process is the drying process. Chuchala et al. (2020) showed that different drying methods affect the machinability and mechanical properties. On the other hand, Orłowski et al. (2019) and Rogoziński et al. (2021) showed that different wood drying methods affect the granulations of chips and dust produced during machining. Various thermal treatment processes also significantly affect the machinability properties and granulation of dust generated during machining (Kučerka and Očkajová 2018; Aro et al., 2019; Kminiak and Dzurenda, 2019; Piernik et al., 2019; Kminiak et al., 2020; Očkajová et al. 2020). Furthermore, the chemical impregnation also significantly affect machinability properties (Licow et al., 2020; Sinn et al., 2020) and granulometry of chips and dusts produced during sawing process (Hlásková et al., 2015 Orłowski et al., 2018).

Therefore, the aim of the presented research was to verify how the natural modification of wood through a long-term exposure to the salted waters and ice of the Arctic Ocean affects the level of fine dust generated during sawing operations. The results of such an analysis could be very useful for the preparation of a suitable, health-safe process for machining driftwood in order to use it as a valuable construction or furniture material.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Materials

The study was carried out on Arctic driftwood samples collected from

the North Coast of Iceland (latitude: 66.167418° N, longitude: –16.647679° W). The driftwood samples were collected by courtesy of a local farmer, who was the owner of that land (Fig. 1a). Collected driftwood logs were cut into boards and in this shape were stored in outdoor conditions for a period of two years. Randomly selected two boards were used for preparation of the four rectangular blocks from each board (Fig. 1b) of dimensions 50 mm × 50 mm × 600 mm (width (W) × height (H) × length (L), respectively). Rectangular blocks were prepared in the carpentry workshop Trésmiðja H Ben ehf in Akureyri (Iceland). All experimental samples after transportation to Poland were conditioned in laboratory conditions for 12 months, assuring constant air temperature ( $T_a$ ) of 20 °C and relative humidity (RH) of 65%.

Experimental samples were subjected to the biological species verification process. The samples were verified as Siberian larch (*Larix sibirica* L.) and Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris* L.). The wood anatomical analysis process was carried out by microscopic observation on Leica DM2500 light microscope (Leica Microsystems, Wetzlar, Germany) with magnification of 1000×. Ultrathin (10–20 µm) samples of transverse, tangential and radial sections were cut-out with the microtome and mounted on the microscope slide. The tree species of the driftwood where analysed using standard wood anatomical methods based on e.g. the anatomical descriptions in Eggertsson (1993) and Hellmann et al. (2013), (2015), (2017). The provenance of analysed drifted logs was estimated by combining microscopic observations and literature references as the Central or Eastern Siberia (Hellmann et al., 2015, 2017).

The second group of samples for comparative analysis, as a reference material, were prepared from a log of Siberian larch imported by the sawmill from Eastern Siberia. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain Scots pine from Eastern Siberia. Therefore, for this species as reference material were used Scots pine harvested from Pomeranian Region of Poland. The reference samples were prepared with similar dimensions to driftwood samples and matching (as much as possible)

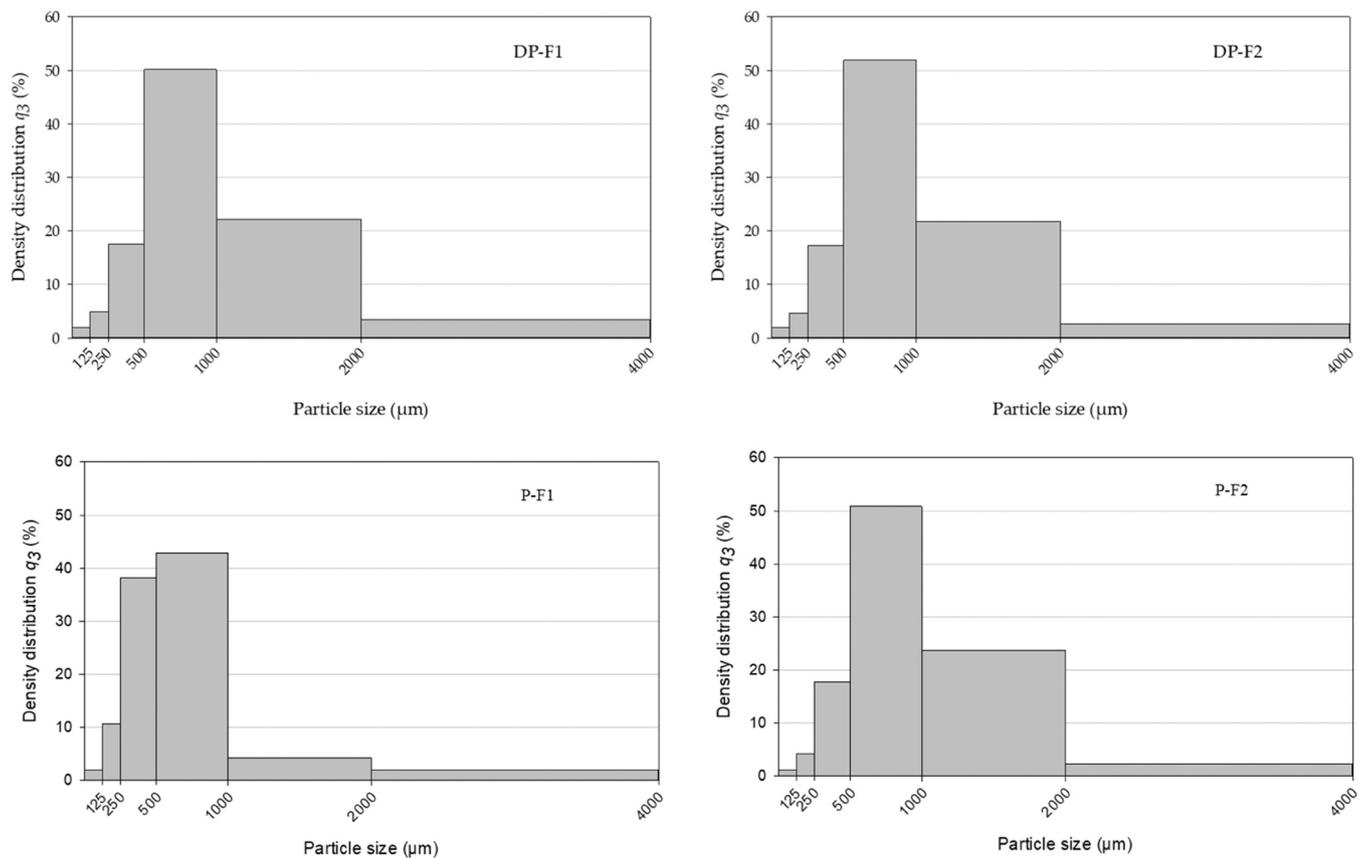


Fig. 3. Particle size distributions of pine wood dust – by sieve analysis method in a function of both drifting and normal wood and feed per tooth.

Table 3

Mean particle-size distribution of dust for drifting and normal wood for both analysed species and standard deviations (SD).

Dust	Arithmetic mean diameter $\mu\text{m}$	SD $\mu\text{m}$
DL-F1	642.9	173.0
DL-F2	720.9	220.8
L-F1	670.0	194.8
L-F2	686.4	289.1
DP-F1	785.8	259.9
DP-F2	791.0	242.4
P-F1	550.3	201.7
P-F2	812.0	238.0

DL-F1 – driftwood larch sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z1}$ ; DL-F2 – driftwood larch sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z2}$ ; L-F1 – larch sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z1}$ ; L-F2 – larch sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z2}$ ; DP-F1 – driftwood pine sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z1}$ ; DP-F2 – driftwood pine sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z2}$ ; P-F1 – pine sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z1}$ ; P-F2 – pine sawed with feed per tooth  $f_{z2}$ ;

similar structure properties, e.g.: annual ring orientation as well as late/early wood ratio. The reference wood samples were not exposed to any production treatment. The wood density  $\rho$  as a ratio of the wood mass to its volume at the air-dry state (moisture content MC = 12%), was measured separately on each block of both driftwood and reference sample groups (Table 1).

## 2.2. Sash gang saw and saw blade

Experimental cutting tests were conducted on the PRW15M sash-gang saw with a hybrid dynamically balanced driving system and elliptical teeth trajectory movement (Wasielewski and Orłowski 2002). Detailed technical parameters of the sash-gang saw and saw blades used

in experimental cutting tests are presented in Table 2. The sawing process was conducted with two levels of feed speed:  $v_{f1} = 0.99 \text{ m min}^{-1}$  and  $v_{f2} = 1.45 \text{ m min}^{-1}$ . This corresponds to a feed per tooth  $f_{z1}$  0.116 mm and 0.171 mm, respectively. The mean value of feed per tooth  $f_z$  for a sash-gang saw was calculated as in Eqs. 1 and 2 (Chuchala et al., 2020; Sinn et al., 2020; Chuchala et al., 2021).

$$f_z = \frac{1000 \cdot v_f \cdot t_p}{n_f \cdot H_f} \quad (1)$$

$$v_f = \frac{L}{t_c} \quad (2)$$

where:  $v_f$  – feed speed ( $\text{m} \cdot \text{min}^{-1}$ ),  $t_p$  – tooth pitch (mm),  $L$  – length of the sample (m),  $H_f$  – saw frame stroke (mm),  $n_f$  – number of strokes of saw frame per min (spm) and  $t_c$  – cutting time (min) necessary to process sample of the length  $L$ .

## 2.3. Wood dust particle size analysis

Dust and wood chips generated during the frame sawing process were collected into the box located under the sawing machine inside of the machine tool. The frame of the sawing machine had a top-down air blowing system. Air blowing system and gravitation directed the dust and chips into the box. The box was emptied after each set of cut wood (species, type, feed per tooth) and the collected portion was taken for granulometric analysis. An extensive granulometric analysis was performed with two complementary methods. The first covered the general particle size distribution without any information considering the finest fractions of dust and was determined by sieving method. A set of standardized wire sieves with mesh sizes of 2, 1, 0.5, 0.25, 0.125 mm was used for this purpose. The set of sieves was placed on the top sieve of the vibratory sieve shaker Retsch AS 200 (Retsh GmbH, Haan, Germany).

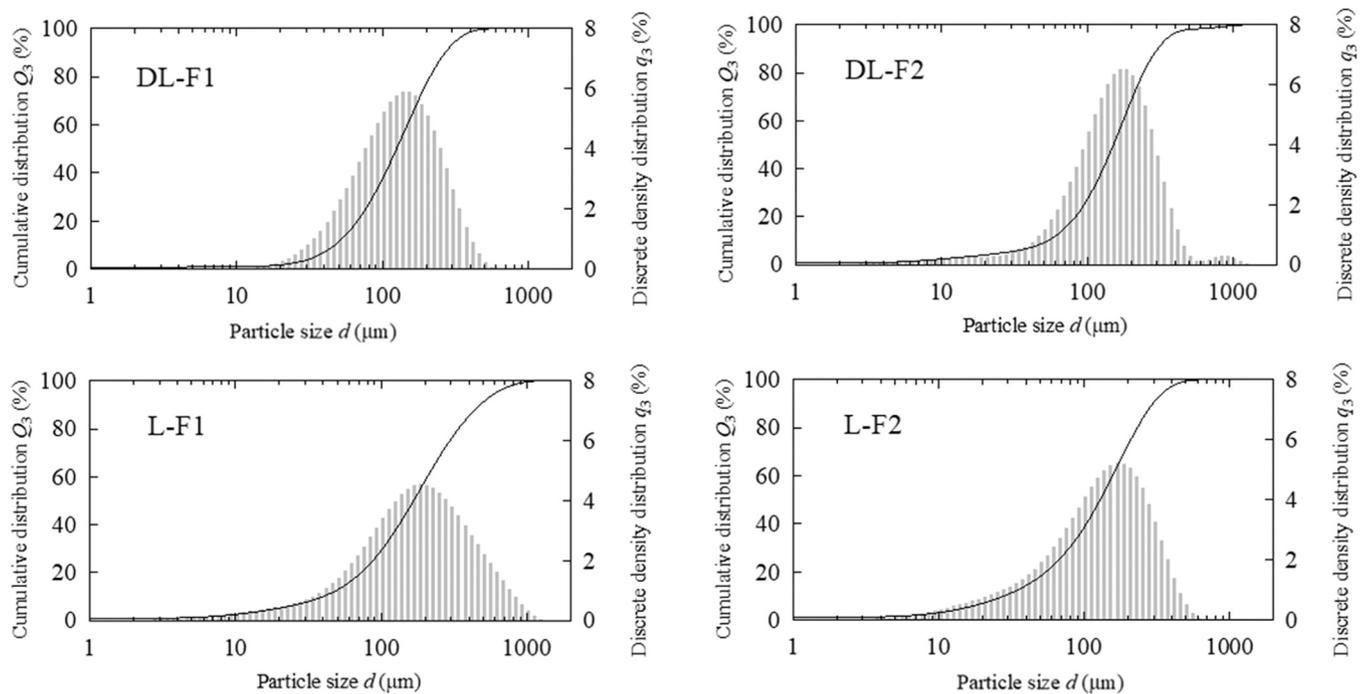


Fig. 4. Particle size distributions of larch wood dust fraction < 125  $\mu\text{m}$  as a function of both wood types (normal and drifted) and feed per tooth.

Sieve analysis critical for non-spherical, in particular elongated or fibrous wood particles. The sieving parameters were set in accordance with the standard ISO 3310-1: amplitude 2 mm, sieving time  $t = 15$  min, sawdust sample mass 50 g. The particle size distributions were obtained by weighing the fractions remaining on the sieves after sieving. A laboratory balance Radwag 510/C/2 (Radwag, Radom, Poland) with weighing accuracy 0.001 g was used for weighing the sawdust fractions. Basing on the results of determination of particle-size distribution the arithmetic mean diameter and the standard deviation of each distribution were calculated as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i \cdot q_{3i}}{N} \quad (1)$$

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x}) \cdot q_{3i}}{n - 1}} \quad (2)$$

where:

$\bar{x}$  – arithmetic mean value of distribution;  $q_3$  – density distribution by mass;  $x$  – average value of particle size class;  $n$  – number of particle size classes;  $N$  – the sum of the distribution by mass;  $\sigma$  – standard deviation of distribution.

However, the sieve analysis provides only a general particle-size distribution without any information on the mass content of potentially respirable dust fraction. Therefore, laser particle size analysis as second method was used. The Analysette 22 Microtec Plus laser particle sizer (Fritsch, Germany) was used to specify details regarding the size of the respirable dust particles smaller than 125  $\mu\text{m}$  (collected in the bottom collector). The laser particle sizer automatically measures a particle size according to a predetermined Standard Operating Procedure which uses Fraunhofer calculation model and assuming that the density is constant. Therefore, the volume distribution is a mass distribution. The obtained results were processed with the MaScontrol software. It gives two types of quantities; the sum of the distribution  $Q(x)$  and the density of the distribution  $q(x)$ . According to  $dQr(x) = qr(X) dx$ ,  $qr(x)$  is a component of  $dQr(x)$ , which is contained in the interval  $dx$  for particles from  $x$  and  $x + dx$ . The result is a random variable  $r$  (when  $r = 3$ , means volume distribution), where:

$$q_r(x) = \frac{x^r \cdot q_0(x)}{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^r \cdot q_{0i}(x_i)} = \frac{dQ_r(x)}{dx} \quad (3)$$

The most important particle size ranges (<2.5  $\mu\text{m}$ , 2.5–4  $\mu\text{m}$ , 4–10  $\mu\text{m}$ ) were used to calculate the content of fine particles in the total mass of sawdust.

### 3. Results and discussion

The results of the sieve analysis of the obtained sawdust are presented in Fig. 2 for larch and Fig. 3 for pine. In Table 3 are presented the values of arithmetic means of the particle diameter and standard deviations for all analysed types of samples. Analysing the data in Figs. 2 and 3, it can be observed that as the feed per tooth increases during the sawing process, bigger sawdust sizes are obtained. This phenomenon was observed for both analysed wood species, as well as for natural wood and driftwood. In additional similar observation was obtained by Rogoziński et al. (2021) for pine and beech wood dried by two different methods. Overall, there were no noticeable differences in dust size proportions depending on whether the wood was drifted or normal. Only in the case of pine wood sawed with a lower feed per edge was the proportion of normal wood dust in the 125 – 500  $\mu\text{m}$  size significantly higher compared to driftwood. Driftwood had, in this case, a higher proportion of dust in sizes above 1000  $\mu\text{m}$  (Fig. 3). This phenomenon is also reflected in the value of the arithmetic mean of the dust particle diameters, which for normal pine wood is significantly smaller for sawing with a lower feed per tooth  $f_{z1}$  than the corresponding value obtained for driftwood (Table 3). The sieve method showed no noticeable differences between the dust sizes obtained for normal and driftwood. For both wood species analysed, the proportions of dust sizes particularly hazardous to human health (IARC, 2012), i.e. smaller than 125  $\mu\text{m}$ , were similar for normal and driftwood (Figs. 2 and 3).

However, the sieve method does not allow the analysis of fine wood dust particles, and it is the fine particles that are most dangerous to the health of woodworking machinery operators. Therefore, an additional dust analysis was carried out using the laser method. The results of fine particles of wood dusts are presented in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5. Both Figs. (4 and 5) show that the dust batch that passed through the sieve with the

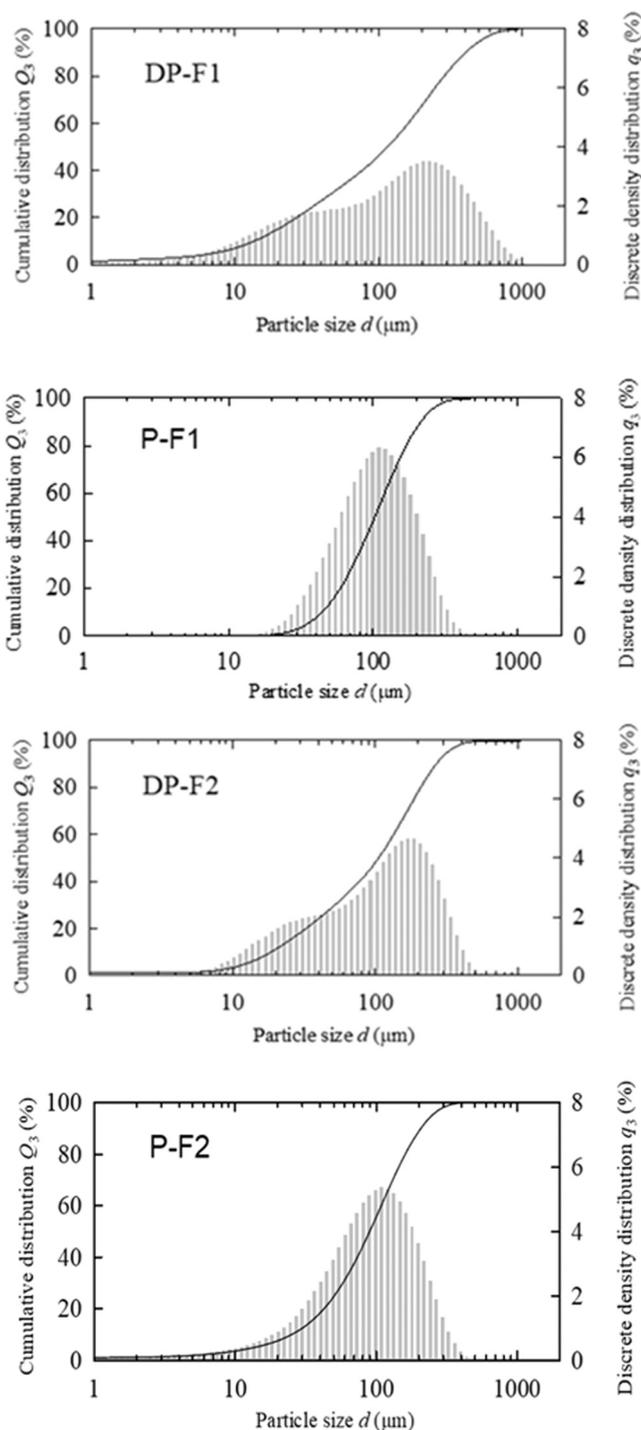


Fig. 5. Particle size distributions of pine wood dust fraction  $< 125 \mu\text{m}$  as a function of both wood types (normal and drifted) and feed per tooth.

smallest mesh in the sieve method, i.e. potentially only particles smaller than  $125 \mu\text{m}$  in diameter, very much contains dust particles of larger sizes. This phenomenon is due to the fact that wood dust particles do not have a sphere-like shape, but more like a cylinder (Ding et al., 2020; Santamaría-Herrera et al., 2023). This shape allows a particle to pass through a sieve with a mesh diameter of less than  $125 \mu\text{m}$  if the smaller particle dimension (diameter of the cylinder base) is smaller than the sieve mesh, and despite the fact that the larger particle dimension (height of the cylinder) is significantly larger than the sieve mesh.

Fig. 4 shows the distribution of fine dust particles for larch wood. There were minor differences between the distributions for samples

Table 4

Statistical values of fine particles of the dust ( $< 125 \mu\text{m}$ ) and standard deviations (SD).

Dust	Arithmetic mean diameter $\mu\text{m}$	SD $\mu\text{m}$
DL-F1	143.32	142.56
DL-F2	173.36	173.36
L-F1	201.49	187.24
L-F2	148.02	105.83
DP-F1	167.79	217.81
DP-F2	127.40	167.80
P-F1	117.51	68.61
P-F2	106.16	74.17

produced during the sawing process with different feed per edge, either for normal and driftwood. As the value of feed per edge increases, the proportion of  $10\text{--}20 \mu\text{m}$  particles increases slightly. Whereas larch driftwood dusts are characterised by a higher proportion of particles larger than  $100 \mu\text{m}$ . On the other hand, in the Fig. 5 are shown the distribution of fine dust particles for pine wood in wide range ( $\leq 1000 \mu\text{m}$ ). The distribution of fine driftwood dust particles is broader for size  $< 20 \mu\text{m}$ , for both analysed feeds per tooth. This phenomenon is clearly different from the case of larch wood presented in Fig. 4. This phenomenon may be caused by the lower density of pine wood compared to larch wood (Table 1), and thus a higher proportion of earlywood, which potentially could have been characterised by greater absorption of seawater (Maldas and Kamdem, 1999; Javed et al., 2015) and incorporation of sodium (Bartocci et al., 2017), which resulted in greater brittleness of the material (Johnson et al., 1992; Nguyen et al., 2019). On the other hand, the average values shown in Table 4 present a somewhat different picture of this phenomenon. The average values of fine dust size for driftwood are higher than for normal wood. However, both average values have a very high standard deviation, which makes it possible to conclude that the two results (Fig. 5 and Table 4) are not mutually exclusive. Thus, it can be seen that, despite the differences in cutting forces shown by Chuchala et al. (2020), (2021), there are no noticeable differences in dust granulation between larch driftwood and normal wood. Only in the case of pine wood was an increased proportion of fine dust fractions noted for driftwood compared to normal wood. This is very visible for the smallest fractions ( $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$ ), as shown in Fig. 6. Fig. 6 also shows that, for most of the wood analysed, the proportion of the finest dust fraction increases with increasing feed per tooth. Only in the case of driftwood pine, such a relationship does not occur. These differences are not large and were not noticeable in the sieve analysis.

The current Directive (European Union) 2017/2398 of the European Parliament and of the Council specifies that occupational exposure limits are  $2 \text{ mg wooden dust per m}^3$ . This limitation applies to the inhalable fraction, which is the fraction containing the smaller fractions: thoracic and respirable.

#### 4. Conclusions

Long-term staying of wood in Arctic Ocean waters can affect the machinability properties of wood and, as a result of this can affect the level of fine dust generated during sawing operations. Based on the carried out experimental tests and analysis of obtained results, it can be concluded that:

- Larch driftwood shows no significant differences in dust and chip granulation compared to normal larch wood.
- As the feed per tooth increases, the proportion of  $10\text{--}20 \mu\text{m}$  particles increases slightly for driftwood and natural wood of both analysed species.
- In the case of pine driftwood, the distribution of fine dust particles is stronger for size  $< 20 \mu\text{m}$ , for both analysed feeds per tooth.

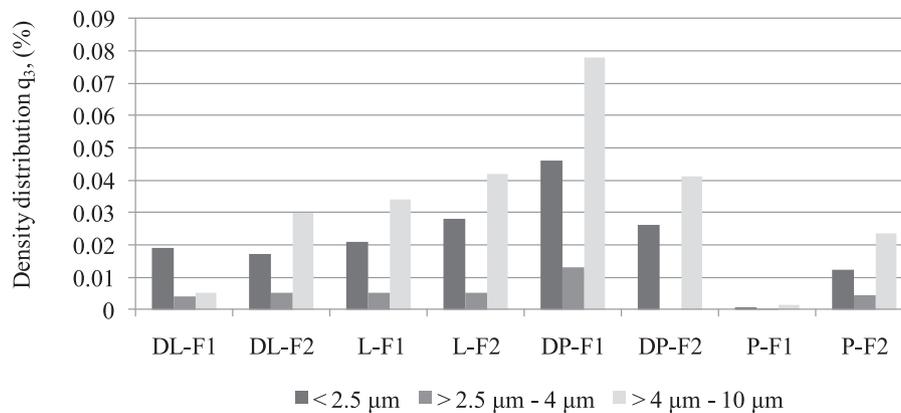


Fig. 6. Content of the finest particles ( $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$ ) in the total mass of sawdust.

- The process of sawing driftwood generates slightly more finest sawdust fractions than normal wood. However, these differences are not significant, indicating that the same dust extraction systems can be used for both sawing processes.

#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Kazimierz Orlowski:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Tomasz Rogoziński:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Daniel Chuchala:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Olafur Eggertsson:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis. **Ludka Hanincová:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis. **Marta Pędzik:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests: Daniel Chuchala reports financial support was provided by Argentum Triggering Research Grants. Daniel Chuchala reports a relationship with Argentum Triggering Research Grants that includes: funding grants.

#### Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

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