

CONTROL OF NOISE AT WORK REGULATIONS 2005

Purpose: To make sure that people do not suffer damage to their hearing that is permanent and disabling. To ensure that noise at work does not interfere with communications and make warnings harder to hear.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require you to eliminate or reduce risks to health and safety for noise at work.

Depending on the level of risk you should:-

- Take action to reduce the exposure to make sure the legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded.

Provide employees with **personal hearing protection**.

You will probably need to do something about workplace noise if:

- Noisy tools or machinery are used for more than 30 minutes per day.
- Employees have to raise their voices to carry out normal conversation when about 2 meters apart.
- There are noises due to impacts such as hammering or use of impact tools.

What is a Noise exposure action level?

An action level is basically a noise exposure level at which employers are required to take certain steps to reduce the harmful effects of noise (or sound pressure measured in decibels) on hearing. There are two main action levels:

- Lower exposure action value is a daily or weekly average noise exposure level of 80 dB, at which the employer has to provide information and training and make hearing protection available. The Peak sound pressure should not exceed 135 decibels.
- Upper exposure action value is set at a daily or weekly average noise exposure of 85 dB, above which the employer is required to take reasonably practicable measures to reduce noise exposure, such as engineering controls or other technical measures. The use of hearing protection is also mandatory if the noise cannot be controlled by these measures, or while these measures are being planned or carried out. The Peak sound pressure should not exceed 137 decibels.

Finally there is an exposure limit value of 87 dB for daily or weekly personal noise exposure, above which no worker can be exposed (taking hearing protection into account).

You should carry out a risk assessment of noise levels in the workplace to decide what action is required and identify which employees are exposed to levels at or above the defined action levels.

Take Action - control the risks

Depending on the level of risk:

- Take appropriate steps to reduce noise exposure at source, other than by the use of hearing protection.
- Provide suitable CE marked hearing protection and give appropriate training and instructions on how to use it.
- Designate any areas that should be ear protection zones and provide information to those working in these areas.

The main source of noise hazards in the workplace is machinery. Noise is produced by vibration of parts of machines and by the materials being worked. Any modification of this vibration will modify the noise generated. Remedial treatment could include any of the following:-

- Machine design & replacement
- Planned maintenance
- Substitution of machine or process
- Vibration isolation, damping(surface treatments) and absorbent materials
- Reducing impact noise Silencers

Health Surveillance

- You must provide this for employees frequently exposed above the upper exposure action value.
- This means regular hearing checks by a suitable doctor or audiologist with records kept.

To Summarise:

- Protect your workers
- Assess the risks
- Reduce the Noise exposure as far as reasonably practical
- Provide personal hearing protection
- Ensure exposure limits are not exceeded
- Take steps to ensure the Action values are exceeded
- Inform, instruct and train
- Health surveillance

Important Notice: Your Health & Safety Information Sheet is for guidance only. It does not replace our written Health & Safety policies and procedures and you must make sure you are fully aware of these.

Training Courses: For more details on our Health & Safety Training courses available, please contact our learning Zone department via email:

learningzone@shrec.org.uk or visit our website:
www.shrec.org.uk