


## Safety Services Guidance



### Noise Strategy

Key word(s) :	Noise, exposure, hearing protection, eliminate, reduce, risk assessment, noise assessment, control measures
Target audience :	Managers and staff with responsibility to control noise within the workplace

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## Noise

1. Occupational noise can cause permanent or disabling hearing damage to individuals. Hearing loss may be a gradual process because of exposure to noise over time, or, instantaneously due to sudden, extreme loud noises.
2. The Control of Noise Regulations 2005 applies where work activities expose employees to harmful levels of noise and requires an employer to eliminate or reduce the risk.

### When to take action

3. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified the following examples where action by the employer would generally be required:
  - The noise is intrusive to an individual;
  - Where employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2m apart;
  - When work is being undertaken for more than half an hour each day when noisy power tools or machinery are in use;
  - In known noisy sectors such as construction, demolition, woodworking, plastic processing, engineering, textile manufacturer, general fabrication, forging or stamping, paper or board making, waste and recycling;
  - Situations when warning sounds are used to avoid or alert to dangerous situations or when working practices rely on verbal communications.

### What action is required (Detection)

4. A risk assessment should be completed identifying if there is a risk of harm from occupational noise and who is likely to be affected.
5. A noise assessment should be undertaken by a competent person to assess the exposure to noise and identify if any control measures are required to be put in place to eliminate or reduce noise levels. The person carrying out the measurements must have sufficient training or knowledge in carrying out noise measurements and practical experience in using sound-measuring equipment.
6. The findings must be recorded along with the actions taken or intended to take to comply with the law.

## **Controlling the risks (Protection)**

7. There are levels of noise exposure which must not be exceeded. These are called exposure limit values and the maximum daily or weekly exposure is 87 dB(A) and the maximum peak sound pressure is 140 dB(C). These levels take account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection, above which employees must not be exposed.
8. If the daily or weekly noise level reaches 85 dB(A) or 137 dB(C), the law says that hearing protection must be worn. The employer must ensure that 'Hearing Protection Zones' are clearly marked with adequate safety signage. Health surveillance must be provided for those employees affected. Training and information must be provided by the employer to staff of the risks from noise induced hearing loss and effective methods to prevent it.
9. Where the daily personal noise exposure is likely to equal or exceed 80dB (A) or 135dB (C), the employer must inform their employees of the potential risk to hearing and provide a choice of hearing protection on request.
10. The employer should take action that is 'reasonably practicable' ie in proportion to the level of risk. If the noise exposure is below the lower action values, the risk will be considered low and it is likely no action is required by the employer.

## **Controlling the noise**

11. Any new equipment purchased should be designed, engineered and manufactured in such a way as to minimise noise levels.
12. Maintenance of new and existing plant or equipment should be undertaken as described by the manufacturer with appropriate records being kept;
13. Training and information should be provided to staff of the risks from noise induced hearing loss and effective methods to prevent it.
14. Where hearing protection is required, staff should be consulted on the different types of hearing protection available.

## Further information

15. Further information can be found at:

- The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (L108)  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l108.htm>
- Safety Services Guidance: Occupational Noise  
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15619>
- [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

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