

Health & Safety Management Arrangements For Controlling Noise at Work

Management and Employee Guidance

Introduction

This guidance has been prepared in order to give managers and employees guidance to ensure staff are not exposed to noise which may affect their health and safety. These arrangements have been produced in accordance with The Control of Noise at Work regulations 2005 and the accompanying Approved Code of Practice (L108) as well as the health & Safety Executives guidance document "Sound Advice – Control of noise at work in the music and entertainment industry" (HSG260).

A simple guide to establish whether a workplace requires a detailed noise risk assessment is:-

- a) Employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2m apart for any part of the day;
- b) Employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day;
- c) Employees are exposed to impact noises such as pneumatic impact tools or hammering.
- d) Staff have raised their concerns about noise levels within the service area and have requested the use of/or wear hearing protection.

Definition(s)

Noise is simply defined as "unwanted sound". Evidence shows excessive noise has health effects if uncontrolled, and hearing can be irreversibly damaged. This can cause sounds to become muffled, or the individual may develop tinnitus, (a ringing in the ears). Hearing can also be damaged by short exposure to sudden high-pressure noise from explosions and other impact sounds.

"*exposure action value*" (EAV) means the levels of daily or weekly personal noise exposure or of peak sound pressure which, if reached or exceeded, require specific actions to be taken to reduce risk;

Lower exposure action values (LEAV) are:

- daily or weekly exposure of 80dB (A)
- peak sound pressure of 135dB(C)

Upper exposure action values (UEAV) are:

- daily or weekly exposure of 85dB(A)
- peak sound pressure of 137dB(C)

“*exposure limit value*” (ELV) means the level of daily or weekly personal noise exposure or of peak sound pressure which must not be exceeded.

- daily or weekly exposure of 87dB(A)
- peak sound pressure of 140dB(C)

“*Daily personal noise exposure*” means the level of daily personal noise exposure of an employee taking account of the level of noise and the duration of exposure and covering all noise.

Competent Person means some one who has the skills, knowledge, attitude, training and experience in the field of noise. This maybe someone who has had training and experience in noise assessments or a consultant hired specifically to conduct a Noise at Work assessment as per the regulations.

Management Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Managers to ensure:

- A competent person carries out a suitable and sufficient noise risk assessment. (This maybe one of the Departments Health and Safety Officers, a suitably trained member of staff or a consultant). (See Flow chart in appendix 3)
- New plant or equipment is assessed prior to procurement, for the lowest reasonable noise emitting levels. Managers should request specific information from manufacturers/suppliers prior to purchase/hire to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that noise exposure is below the 2nd action level and seek guidance from the HSR Team where this cannot be achieved (see appendix 1).
- They prevent personal exposure to noise levels exceeding the upper exposure limit values. (See Appendix 1 – Definitions)
- They provide employees with adequate hearing protection and enforce its use when noise levels are above the upper exposure action value, where such exposure cannot be reduced at source.
- Hearing protection is available to employees upon request when noise levels are above the lower exposure action value.
- They arrange routine noise health surveillance within their service area when the noise risk assessment indicates a risk to employees’ health.
- They arrange pre-employment health screening for all new ‘at risk’ employees.
- ‘at risk’ employees within their service area are given suitable information, instruction, and training on noise risks and the appropriate controls.
- Any conflicting issues that they cannot resolve are escalated to a senior manager.

Employee Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure;

- They co-operate with the Health & Safety arrangements and guidance provided for the control of noise at work.
- They co-operate with any controls put in place, including the wearing of any personal hearing protection provided.(see flow chart)
- They inform their line managers of any adverse health effects that have developed which may be associated with noise exposure.
- They provide input on health and safety issues, which may affect their well being of themselves or their fellow workers. Employees are encouraged to discuss improvements on any aspects of the noise risk management programme.
- They report any defects in work equipment, including personal protective equipment, (PPE) to their line manager.
- They attend all health surveillance appointments with Occupational Health.

Health, Safety and Resilience Team Responsibilities

The Health, Safety and Resilience team will:

- Undertake noise assessments by request; provide a written record and action plan such an assessment.
- Ensure noise assessment and action plan is fully communicated to the Service Manager and appropriate Health & Safety committees for tracking/compliance.
- Provide services with appropriate information, instruction and training on noise related issues arising from noise assessments.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the noise control systems and provide feedback on required improvements to the relevant services.

Occupational Health Responsibilities

Occupational Health will:

- Carry out pre-employment and routine audiometric assessments for relevant Council employees.
- Ensure that cases of employees being affected by workplace noise are reported to service area management and the Departmental Health & Safety Officer.
- Ensure that copies of records on health surveillance are maintained and stored so that either the employee or the enforcing authority may obtain such records on request

Assessment

Assessment of exposure

Appendix 3 shows the process for managing noise at work.

Examples of areas and work activities that may require assessment include woodworking and other machinery workshops, grass strimming, grass cutting with sit on mowers, print-rooms, boiler rooms, ventilation plant rooms, areas which contain air compressors or other machinery, plant or equipment.

An assessment will also be required where noise becomes intrusive for most of the working day, for example where a vacuum cleaner runs continuously throughout the day, or where employees have to raise their voices to hold a normal conversation 2m away from each other. Some examples of typical noise levels are given in Table 1.

"Noisy" areas, work activities or processes where there is likely to be risk from noise exposure must be assessed by a competent person. Generally, noise measurements will be arranged via the Health, Safety and Resilience Team.

The assessment will measure and record the actual noise levels in the work area. The findings of the assessment should be compared to the action and exposure limit values detailed within the Definitions (Appendix1).

If the noise levels exceed the lower noise exposure levels, a further detailed assessment will be undertaken to determine the likely exposure levels in the workplace. The assessor (the competent person) will provide a detailed noise assessment report and action plan.

In all cases the assessment will be recorded and reviewed at least every two years, or when there is a significant change that may invalidate the original assessment.

Information, instruction and training.

The importance of training cannot be understated and in many cases the employee's exposure to noise will be determined by their diligence in using control measures and adhering to good practice. Employees at risk from exposure to noise must understand the risk to their health, the control measures in place to control exposure and the importance of using these appropriately. Training records should be maintained. In most cases the HSR team will provide Information, instruction and training on noise.

Noise risk controls

The general duty to eliminate or reduce noise exposure applies whenever there is a risk from noise and irrespective of whether any exposure action values are exceeded. The following hierarchy of risk controls apply to the exposure of noise hazards;

- Take action to **eliminate** risks from noise exposure completely wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so
- If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks completely, to **reduce** them to as low a level as is reasonably practicable
- To introduce a formal programme of measures to **reduce noise exposure** whenever an employee's exposure to noise is likely to exceed the upper exposure action values (these measures **cannot** include hearing protection which is addressed separately)
- Not to expose anyone above the exposure limit values

Eliminate or reduce risk

To comply with these duties above, managers will need to:

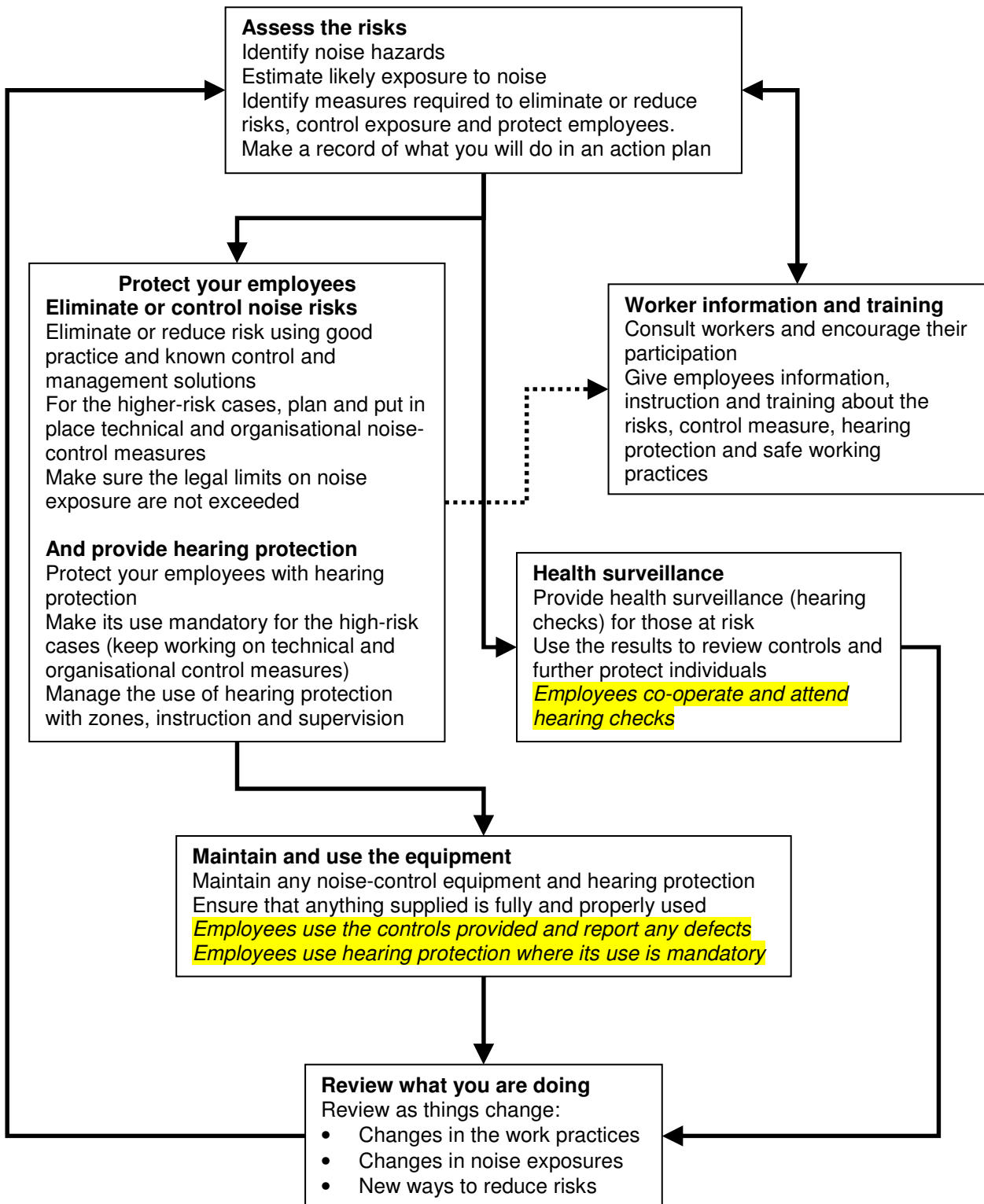
- Consider whether there are alternative processes, equipment and/or working methods which would eliminate risks from noise exposure;
- Follow good practice and industry standard control measures
- Take noise into account when selecting tools and machinery
- Maintain machinery in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations
- Explore any opportunity to provide employees with periods of relief from noise exposure

Guide to Noise Levels

Activity	dB(A)
Quiet office	40-50
Normal conversation	50-60
Loud radio	65-70
Tractor cab	75-85
Busy street	78-85
Power drill	90-100
Heavy lorry (7m away)	95-100
Bar of a night club	95-105
Road drill	100-110
Chain saw	115-120
Jet aircraft taking off (25m away)	140

Table 1

Managing Noise Risks Flow Chart



Key: Employer actions
Employee actions