

Health & Safety, Edinburgh Napier University

Noise Policy

(The Control of Noise at Work Regulations)

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1. Introduction

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations have implications for some of the work activities undertaken in the University. This includes music and entertainment activities within the University.

Noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) or industrial deafness has long been recognised as a preventable industrial disease and, to this end, the Control of Noise at Work Regulations outline the necessary preventative measures.

The Regulations place statutory obligations on the University to carry out an assessment on the noise levels in those areas where staff, students and visitors are likely to be exposed to noise at or above defined action levels. Depending on the levels of noise measured and the period of exposure, the University is obliged to introduce certain preventative and/or protective measures. Failure to carry out noise assessments or introduce preventative/protective measures can lead to prosecution under the Health and Safety at Work (HSWA) Act.

A number of activities in the University have already been identified as producing levels of noise at or above one or more action levels and measures have been adopted to reduce the exposure levels. However, the School or Service may have purchased equipment, machinery, etc. since the introduction of the Regulations which when installed and used will exceed the action levels. In such cases it is essential that the relevant Dean of School or Director of Service informs the University Health and Safety Team. It should be noted that personnel do not need to be exposed to a noise for the whole of a working day for the statutory limits to be exceeded. Likewise personnel may be exposed to highly variable noise levels, e.g. because they move about and use noisy equipment/tools as required.

As an approximation, an assessment should be carried out wherever personnel have to shout to be clearly heard by someone at 2 metres distance, or they find it difficult to talk to each other because of the noise levels. Where there is doubt the Health and Safety Team will arrange for the noise levels to be measured. Should the measurements confirm that the noise levels are being exceeded, recommendations will be made to the School or Service on noise reduction measures.

Noise assessments should be reviewed if there is any reason to consider they are no longer valid or there has been a significant change in the work. The change could arise from the installation or removal of machinery, changes in work patterns or use of machines, changes in building structure, machine layout or the age of the equipment (wear and tear) and lack of maintenance.

Dependent on which noise action level is exceeded will determine the measures to be adopted to protect personnel. In some circumstances the issue of ear protectors will suffice, in others, noise reduction techniques will be required. Reliance on ear protectors should be seen as a last resort.

Where ear protectors are recommended, wearers require to be instructed as to why they are being issued, where and how they should be worn, and how they should be stored, maintained and replaced. Whenever possible users should be given a personal choice of protectors to ensure that the user is comfortable. All hearing protection is personal issue only.

Deans of School and Directors of Service are responsible for ensuring that any measures taken to reduce noise levels in compliance with the Regulations are maintained and used. Records should be kept of the issue of protectors to individuals and any problems encountered in their use. Provision

should be made for protectors and other equipment to be inspected periodically and repaired and replaced as required. Proper provision should be made for clean storage of protectors.

Results of personal noise exposure monitoring will be issued in report form to the Deans of School or Directors of Service, Human Resources & Development (Occupational Health) and to the individual(s) concerned. Records of noise assessments and of any preventative/protective measures introduced will be kept by the University Health and Safety Team and the relevant Dean of School or Director of Service. All records will be retained for a minimum of 5 years and all personal dosimetry records shall be retained by Human Resources (Occupational Health) for a minimum of 4 years (such records will not be available to third parties without the signed consent of the individual concerned).

Employees have a duty under the HSWA and Noise at Work Regulations to safeguard their hearing and are responsible for co-operating with the measures introduced by the University to protect their health and safety. These duties include making use of any noise reduction or hearing protective equipment provided.

Contractors will be obliged by the University to identify any equipment or work method brought into the University premises or grounds whose operation will exceed the action levels. The University reserves the right to prohibit noisy items of equipment or work methods where quieter alternatives are available. This requires to be covered in the contractor induction by the contract administrator.

It will be the responsibility of the Dean of School or Director of Service engaging the contractor to ensure compliance with the University's policy on noise.

2. Exposure limit values and action values

Lower exposure action values

The lower exposure limit is split into two different action values - the daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80 dB and a peak sound pressure of 135 dB.

Upper exposure action values

The upper limit is also split into two different action values - the daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85 dB and a peak sound pressure of 137 dB.

Exposure limit values

The exposure limit is split into two different action values - the daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 87 dB and a peak sound pressure of 140 dB.

Note - Where personnel are subjected to marked variations in noise levels then the weekly personal noise exposure number will apply.

Exposure action values

The Noise Regulations define 'exposure action values' – levels of noise exposure which, if exceeded, require you to take specific action. There are 'lower' and 'upper' action values.

You need to compare your estimated noise exposure with the action values to know what specific actions are required of you in addition to your general duty to reduce risks from noise.

	Lower exposure action value (decibels)	Upper exposure action value (decibels)
Daily or weekly personal noise exposure ($L_{EP,d}$ or $L_{EP,w}$)	80	85
Peak sound pressure (L_{Cpeak})	135	137

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf> - Page 4

3. Assessment of the risk to health and safety

Where the University carries out work which is liable to expose any person to noise at or above a lower exposure action value, the School or Service shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk from that noise to the health and safety of those personnel, and the risk assessment shall identify the measures which need to be taken to meet the requirements of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations.

In conducting the risk assessment, the School or Service shall assess the levels of noise to which people are exposed by means of:

- Observation of specific working practices.
- Reference to relevant information on the probable levels of noise corresponding to any equipment used in the particular working conditions.
- If necessary, measurement of the level of noise to which personnel are likely to be exposed and the School or Service shall assess whether any persons are likely to be exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action value, an upper exposure action value, or an exposure limit value.

The risk assessment shall include consideration of:

- The level, type and duration of exposure, including any exposure to peak sound pressure.
- The effects of exposure to noise on persons whose health is at particular risk from such exposure.
- So far as is practicable, any effects on the health and safety of persons resulting from the interaction between noise and the use of toxic substances at work, or between noise and vibration.
- Any indirect effects on the health and safety of personnel resulting from the interaction between noise and audible warning signals or other sounds that need to be audible in order to reduce risk at work.

- Any information provided by the manufacturers of work equipment.
- The availability of alternative equipment designed to reduce the emission of noise.
- Any extension of exposure to noise at the workplace beyond normal working hours, including exposure in rest facilities supervised by the School or Service.
- Appropriate information obtained following health surveillance, including, where possible, published information.
- The availability of personal hearing protection, with adequate attenuation characteristics to prevent hearing being damaged.

The risk assessment shall be reviewed regularly, and forthwith if:

- There is reason to suspect that the risk assessment is no longer valid, or
- There has been a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates and where, as a result of the review, changes to the risk assessment are required, those changes shall be made.

The personnel concerned or their representatives shall be consulted on the assessment of risk under the provisions of this regulation.

The School or Service shall record the significant findings of the risk assessment as soon as is practicable after the risk assessment is made or changed and the measures which have been taken to meet the requirements of regulations 6, 7 and 10.

4. Eliminate or control exposure to noise

The University shall ensure that risk from the exposure to noise for all personnel is either eliminated at source or, where this is not reasonably practicable, reduced to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

If any person is likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value, the School or Service shall reduce exposure to as low a level as is reasonably practicable by establishing and implementing a programme of organisational and technical measures, excluding the provision of personal hearing protectors, which is appropriate to the activity.

The actions taken by the School or Service with regard to the general principles of prevention are set out in the Management of Health and Safety Regulations. The School or Service shall consider the following:

- Other working methods which reduce exposure to noise.
- Choice of appropriate work equipment emitting the least possible noise, taking account of the work to be done.
- The design and layout of workplaces, workstations and rest facilities.
- Suitable and sufficient information and training for personnel, so that work equipment may be used correctly in order to minimise their exposure to noise.
- Reduction of noise by technical means.

- Appropriate maintenance programmes for work equipment, the workplace and workplace system.
- Limitation of the duration and intensity of exposure to noise and appropriate work schedules with adequate rest periods.

The School or Service shall ensure that personnel are not exposed to noise above an exposure limit value or, if an exposure limit value is exceeded, then they must carry out the following:

- Reduce exposure to noise to below the exposure limit value.
- Identify the reason for that exposure limit value being exceeded.
- Modify the organisational and technical measures taken in accordance with the maintenance and use of equipment to prevent it being exceeded again.

Where rest facilities are made available to personnel, the School or Service shall ensure that exposure to noise is reduced to a level suitable for their purpose and conditions of use.

The School or Service shall adapt any measure taken in compliance with the requirements of this policy to take account of any person whose health is likely to be particularly at risk from exposure to noise.

The staff concerned or their representatives shall be consulted on the measures to be taken to meet the requirements of this policy.

5. Hearing protection

If in any area of the workplace under the control of the University where people are exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value then the School or Service shall ensure that: -

- The area is designated a Hearing Protection Zone.
- The area is demarcated and identified by means of a sign specified for the purpose of indicating that ear protection must be worn.
- Access to the area is restricted where this is practicable and the risk from exposure justifies it.

No person shall enter this area unless they are wearing the correct type of personal hearing protection.

Personal hearing protection must be made available so that it eliminates the risk to hearing or reduces the risk to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

6. Maintenance and use of equipment

- Ensure that the Personal Protective Equipment for personal use is properly used, in efficient working order and in good repair.
- Any defects need to be reported to the line manager.

- Any defective equipment is to be removed from use and replaced.
- Ensure that maintenance is carried out on noise producing equipment to maintain or improve on noise emissions.

7. Health surveillance

- If the risk assessment indicates there is a risk to the health of any person, then the provision of health surveillance shall include testing their hearing.
- A record will be kept of any employee undergoing health surveillance by the occupational health support.
- Where an identifiable hearing damage issue is found then the individual will be examined by a doctor.
- The individual requires to be informed by a suitably qualified person.
- The risk assessment will need to be reviewed.
- That individual must be assigned to alternative work where there is no risk from further exposure to noise, taking into account any advice given by the doctor or occupational health professional.
- Continued health surveillance is provided for a review of the health of any person who has been exposed.

8. Information, instruction and training

Where an employee is exposed to noise which is likely to be at or above a lower exposure action value, the University shall provide those individuals with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.

The training shall encompass the following:

- Nature of risks from exposure to noise.
- Organisational and technical measures taken to eliminate or reduce the exposure.
- Exposure limit values, both upper and lower.
- Significant findings of the risk assessment, including measurements taken.
- Availability and provision of personal hearing protectors.
- Why and how to detect and report signs of hearing damage.
- Entitlement to health surveillance.
- Safe working practices to minimise exposure to noise.
- Collective results of any health surveillance undertaken, with no way of identifying a particular person.

The information, instruction and training shall take into account any significant changes in the type of work carried out.

Any persons carrying out work in a noisy area must have suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.

[HSE noise calculator](#)