



EAST RIDING

OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Managing Noise at Work Safety Guidance Document

Lead Directorate and Service:	Corporate Resources - Human Resources, Safety Services
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1. Background

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 came into force on 6 April 2006. These regulations replaced those adopted in 1989.

Since 6 April 2008 the Noise Regulations also apply in the ‘music and entertainment’ industry. They apply to all workplaces where live music is played or where recorded music is played in a restaurant, bar, public house, disco or nightclub, or alongside live music or a live dramatic or dance performance.

For the purposes of this document noise is most simply defined as “audible sound”, although it can have significant health effects if left uncontrolled.

2. Foreword

In accordance with the Council’s Corporate Safety Policy, the Council is committed to pursuing continual improvements in health and safety. This safety guidance document supports this commitment and forms part of the Council’s health and safety management system.

3. Implementation

Directorates are responsible for the implementation of this safety guidance document, and communication of its content as appropriate. The aim is to raise safety awareness and minimise the noise exposure to employees and others.

This safety guidance document is available on the Safety Services intranet page and, where employees do not have access to the council’s intranet, via their line manager/headteacher.

The Council relies on the co-operation of all employees, and trades unions for the successful implementation of this safety guidance document.

A review of this safety guidance document will be undertaken three years after its implementation, and where significant changes in legislation or working practices deem this appropriate.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Directors and Heads of Service

Directors and Heads of Service are ultimately responsible and accountable to the Chief Executive for ensuring this safety guidance document is issued to their management team.

4.2 Managers/Headteachers/Supervisors

Managers/headteachers/supervisors need to consider this guidance in relation to work carried out within their control. Appendix one is a step by step list of potential duties; Figure one a managing noise risks flow chart.

Managers, headteachers and supervisors need to identify areas of their work/work equipment where their members of staff may be exposed to noise levels that may be

above the exposure limit values and action levels (see table on page three). From this initial identification a priority list of high, medium and low noise levels can be made.

If managers, headteachers or supervisors identify work areas where noise levels exceed the exposure levels or are unsure of the noise levels they may request that a noise survey/assessment is carried out by contacting Safety Services. The survey/assessment report will identify noise levels, a management plan and review of control measures.

Managers, headteachers and supervisors must implement the findings of the noise survey/assessment.

Managers, headteachers and supervisors need to ensure the control measures are adopted. As well as monitoring and reviewing employee's work activities.

Managers, headteachers or supervisors must ensure that where personal protective equipment is recommended that it is readily available, that staff are suitably trained in how to use it and the use of it is monitored and enforced.

4.3 Employees

Employees must ensure they carry out assigned tasks and duties in accordance with information, instruction, training and agreed safe systems of work. Specifically they must ensure:

- This safety guidance document is complied with;
- They participate in the completion and review of risk assessments;
- They cooperate to enable their manager, supervisor or headteacher to formulate and implement effective management systems. Should any employee have any concerns regarding their work activities or health they must report as soon as possible to their managers;
- Attend health surveillance when required;
- Their own health and safety and that of others are not put at risk by their actions;
- They use noise-control measures in accordance with the line managers/supervisors instructions;
- They wear hearing protection in accordance with safe systems of work provided when exposed at or above the upper exposure action values and at all times in areas marked as hearing protection zones;
- They take care of hearing protectors and noise-control equipment;
- They report any defects found in the hearing protectors or other protective measures or any difficulties in using them.

4.4 Safety Services

The primary function of Safety Services is to support the council and its employees by providing professional, authoritative, impartial advice on all aspects of health, safety and wellbeing. The Safety Services team are able to assist by carrying out 'noise surveys' and advising on control measures necessary to minimise exposure.

Where managers, headteachers or supervisors require further assistance, Safety Services will advise on achieving compliance with this safety guidance document.

4.5 Occupational Health

The Occupational Health Unit will support this policy and procedure by providing managers, headteachers, supervisors and employees with guidance on all work related health issues, including health surveillance and audiometric screening as appropriate to legislative requirements. Further information on the role of Occupational Health can be found on the Council's intranet.

5. Arrangements

5.1 Introduction

Hearing damage caused by exposure to noise is permanent and incurable. Hearing loss is usually gradual due to prolonged exposure although immediate damage can also be caused by sudden extremely loud noises such as those from cartridge operated tools.

As well as hearing loss, exposure to noise can cause tinnitus (ringing/buzzing in the ears) too.

Noise can also create stress and can be a safety hazard at work, interfering with communication and making warnings harder to hear.

These conditions are preventable if noise at work is managed properly as required by The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.

5.2 Managing Noise Risks

Managers need to make an assessment of the risks to health and safety due to noise in the workplace arising from exposure to noise.

The regulations impose action values as follows:

Action Value	Minimum Requirements
Lower exposure action values 80dBA and peak sound pressure 135dBC	Risks must be assessed and hearing protection offered to employees
Upper exposure action values 85dBA and 137dBC	Plus; set up Hearing Protection Zones in the work place and ensure that employees wear hearing protection
Exposure limit value 87dBA and peak sound pressure 140dBC	This level must not be exceeded.

If there is a risk to the health of an employee, health surveillance must be provided.

The HSE have produced an Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) which gives a detailed technical explanation of the requirements, which can be downloaded from the HSE website.

Managers may not have the equipment or expertise to make technical measurements about noise levels in the workplace but they can use the following tables to make a judgement and decide whether they need to seek further assistance.

Technical measurements and assistance with the development of any necessary action plans can be obtained through the Safety Services team.

If the answer to any of the following questions is 'yes' then you have potential noise risks that need to be managed and you should contact Safety Services.

Type of Work			Yes?
Does the work involve: construction, demolition, road repair, workshops, engineering, grounds maintenance or music and entertainment?			
Are noisy power tools or machinery used for more than half an hour each day in total?			
Are there loud noises due to impacts such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools, cartridge-operated tools?			
Are there areas of the workplace where noise levels could interfere with warning or danger signals?			
Assessing general noise levels			
Test	Probable noise level	Is it more than?	
The noise is intrusive but normal conversation is possible.	80dB	6 hrs/day	
You have to shout to talk to someone 2m away.	85dB	2 hrs/day	
You have to shout to talk to someone 1m away	90dB	45 min/day	

When considering the noise levels, no account of any reduction in noise levels provided by wearing hearing protection is allowed to be taken into account in relation to the assessment of risk or exposure.

The Approved Code of Practice also contains a HSE ready-reckoner to enable the management to determine personal noise exposure. An electronic version of this can also be found on the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/calculator.htm>

Figure one contains a 'managing noise risks' flow chart, taken from the ACOP, which indicates both employer and employee actions.

5.3 Risk assessment considerations

Use the information provided by machinery suppliers as an indication of whether there is likely to be a noise problem. Suppliers of machinery are legally required to provide information on the noise emissions from their machinery. It is important to note manufacturer's data does not take into account the different types of environments the equipment is used, in the interaction of other materials, wear and tear and adequate maintenance.

Members of staff may be at risk from the noise created by people other than our own employees (eg on a construction site). In these cases you will need to exchange information with other employers to decide if there is a noise risk.

Any audible sound should be considered as noise and be part of a person's noise exposure. This includes speech, music, noise from communication devices, or personal stereos, as well as the noise of machinery and work processes.

If you decide that you have noise risks that need to be controlled, then you will need to evaluate those risks and plan how they will be controlled. Safety Services can support you to develop an action plan by providing technical measurements of the noise levels. If you are in doubt as to whether there are noise risks, it is advised that you assume there are and proceed accordingly (contact Safety Services if necessary).

You need to compare your estimates of exposure against the lower and upper exposure action values to determine what specific duties apply to you in respect of your staff. Specific duties under regulations 6 (control of noise), 7 (hearing protection) and 10 (information, instruction and training) apply where particular exposure action values are likely to be exceeded.

To decide the likelihood of exposure action values being exceeded you will need to take account of the uncertainties in your estimate of exposure. If you estimate exposure as being close to an exposure action value (see 5.2 above) you should proceed as if the action value has been exceeded.

The likelihood of exposure action values being exceeded can depend on whether particular jobs or activities take place on a daily, weekly or less frequent basis. For example, certain tasks may produce very high noise exposures but may be carried out infrequently. You must consider whether, if you assessed the noise exposure on a particular day, that day was representative of a typical day for that employee. Where workers' tasks vary from day to day, you should compare exposure at least from typical and worst-case working days against the exposure action values, and evaluate risks taking account of the pattern of daily exposure.

5.4 Are the risks as low as is reasonably practicable?

If staff noise exposure is below the lower exposure action values, the risk of hearing damage is likely to be very small. What you need to do in these cases is make sure that the risks remain at this low level. By understanding why the risks are low, you will be better able to make sure that they remain that way, and to know when changes in the workplace could lead to increased risks. Make a record of your current situation, and make sure you have proper systems of maintenance, supervision and management in place to keep on top of the situation. If there are simple measures that can be taken to reduce noise further, it is recommended that you carry them out.

5.5 Consider your general duties to control noise risk

At this stage in the process of evaluating risks you should have a good understanding of the level of risk, the circumstances under which the risks occur and the sources of risk. You will have identified what specific duties apply in relation to the exposure action values. But you should keep in mind the general duty under regulation 6(1) to reduce to the lowest level reasonably practicable. This means you need to consider, in your evaluation of risks, alternative processes, equipment and/or working methods, which would make the work quieter, or mean people are exposed for shorter times. You should be aware of current good practice or the standard for noise control within your industry, considering whether such measures are applicable to your work and adopting them where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

You should also consider whether suitable replacement machinery is available which emits lower levels of noise or would lead to lower levels of noise exposure for particular tasks where employees' noise exposure is influenced by noise emissions from tools and

machinery that you supply for use at work. For example, if a more efficient tool allows work to be carried out in less time, it may lead to lower noise exposures without necessarily emitting less noise during use.

5.6 Competence

To carry out the tasks which may be involved in a noise risk assessment/survey requires a competent person. A “suitable and sufficient” risk assessment/survey is one which, has been produced by someone who is competent to do so i.e. someone who has the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to undertake measurements in the authority’s varied working environments.

Safety Services have safety officers who are competent to carry out such noise risk assessments/surveys.

5.7 General Principles of Prevention

These principles are listed in order of preference. When developing an action plan you must start at the top and work down the list until the noise issue is resolved.

- Avoid the risks;
- Evaluate the risks which cannot be avoided;
- Combat the risks at source;
- Adapt the work to the individual, ie design of workplace, choice of work equipment, working methods;
- Give collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures;
- Give instruction, information and training.
- Is there an alternative process, equipment and/or working methods which will eliminate risks from noise exposure;
- Take noise into account when selecting tools and machinery;
- Maintain machinery in accordance with manufacturers recommendations;
- Look at opportunities to provide periods of relief from noise exposure;
- Personal protective equipment should only be used as a last resort. Where you have to rely on personal protective equipment, it must be suitable and be provided on the basis of a technical assessment of the required attenuation (contact Safety Services if required);
- Hearing protection zones should be established in the workplace wherever the noise level exceeds the Upper Exposure Action Value (85dBA and/or 137 dBC) within which the wearing of personal protective equipment is mandatory.

5.8 Purchasing

The Council’s procurement policy takes noise into account when selecting machinery, in particular:

- When buying, hiring or replacing equipment potential suppliers should be asked for information on the noise emissions of the machines under the conditions for which they will be used;
- Prepare a machine specification which can be taken to the supplier;
- Compare the noise information declared by manufacturers to identify low noise machines;

- Discuss the noise issues with the supplier of the machine;
- Where for whatever reason, if it is necessary to purchase machinery which causes workers to be exposed over the action levels, records should be kept to justify this decision.

5.9 Planned Maintenance

It is important to check that regular maintenance is carried out. Replacement or adjustment of worn or unbalanced parts of machines, lubrication of machine parts, tightening of loose bolts and use of properly sharpened cutting tools can result in significant reduction in the noise level.

5.10 Information, instruction and training

Where employees are exposed to noise which is likely to be at or above the lower exposure action value, suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training should be given.

It is important that employees understand the level of risk they may be exposed to, how it is caused and the possible effects and consequences. The list below highlights some of the issues that should be covered but is not exhaustive:

- The risk to hearing posed by noise exposure in the workplace, and the levels they are likely to be exposed to;
- The control measures to reduce risks and exposure;
- Where and how to obtain ear protection;
- The reasons for personal ear protection, how to use it and where it is needed;
- The existence and location of ear protection zones;
- The employee's own duties under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations
- Encouragement of employees to report any defects they find in equipment supplied to them and also to seek medical advice should they experience any hearing problems and who they should report to.

5.11 Health Surveillance

If the risk assessment indicates that there is a risk to the health of our employees who are, or are liable to be, exposed to noise, then those employees should be identified by their line manager/supervisor and be placed under suitable health surveillance, which shall include testing of their hearing.

Health surveillance is a programme of systematic health checks to identify early signs and systems of work-related ill health and to allow action to be taken to prevent its progression. It is also useful in monitoring the effectiveness of the control measures that have been put in place.

It should include pre-, periodic and post-employment hearing tests.

Records of all health surveillance should be kept, containing information on the individual's fitness to work in noisy environments.

**Appendix 1 A Step by Step List of Managers/Headteachers/Supervisors/
Potential Duties**

Step 1 Identify areas of work/equipment with potential noise issues (see page 4 which gives an initial assessment guide)

Step 2 If findings indicate a potential issue contact Safety Services for a noise survey/assessment. Safety Services will take readings and compile a report

Step 3 Attend meeting with Safety Services to review findings and accept report

Step 4 Implement report recommendations. Typical recommendations may include:

Source of noise considerations:

- Implement engineering controls to silence (expert advice will be required);
- Replacement of equipment to quieter equipment;
- Maintain equipment.
- Pathway (distance) considerations:
- Increase distance from noise source (this reduces the exposure).

Recipient considerations:

- Monitor exposure times and ensure that legal limits are not exceeded;
- Implement hearing protection zones;
- Provide hearing protection for employees as identified and enforce wearing;
- Consult workers and provide information, instruction and training about the risks, control measures, hearing protection (use and storage), and safe working practices;
- Arrange health surveillance (hearing checks) only for those identified via referral to Occupational Health.

Step 5 Review if changes in work practices, noise exposures or technological advances OR every two years if no changes.

Figure 1
Managing noise risks

