

AUTHORISATION: Signature

Date

Purpose and Scope

This procedure defines the system to be adopted at any Company workplace or site, for the control of exposure to Noise at Work.

Procedure

Whilst the Director responsible for H&S has overall responsibility for overseeing Health and Safety within the Company, the Site Supervisor shall ensure that:

- All risks of exposure noise at work are assessed, minimised and otherwise controlled so far as is reasonably practicable on their site

The guidance contained in the following procedure explains how this may be achieved.

Introduction

Construction workers may well be exposed to high levels of noise at work as a result of operating hand-held power tools and machinery or be in the vicinity of such items of plant and equipment when they are being operated by others. As a result the hearing of these workers may be at risk.

Regulatory Control

The Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 have long since obliged all employers to do everything that is reasonably practicable to prevent an individual from being injured due to exposure to hazards at work, including noise.

On the 6th April 2006 The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 came into force introducing far more stringent controls with respect to noise in the workplace. These regulations introduced the following controls:-

Limit Values

A number of limit values were introduced as follows:

Lower Exposure Values:- a daily or weekly personal exposure of 80 dB(A) $L_{EP,d/w}$; and a peak sound pressure of 135dB(C)

Upper Exposure Values:- a daily or weekly personal exposure of 85 dB(A) $L_{EP,d/w}$; and a peak sound pressure of 137dB(C)

The Exposure Limit Values:- a daily or weekly personal exposure of 87 dB(A) $L_{EP,d/w}$; and a peak sound pressure of 140dB(C)

Assessment of Exposure

An assessment of exposure is required whenever it is suspected that any of the limit values are either approached or exceed. Measurements and assessments are undertaken and expressed in the form of a daily personal noise exposure designated LEP,d. which equates to an 8 hour time weighted exposure. In calculating the exposure level as LEP,d no account is taken of any hearing protection being used.

Responsibilities of Employer under the above Regulations

Every employer who carries out work which is liable to expose any employees to noise at or above a lower exposure action value must:

- 1 make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk to the health of employees from the noise and identify the control measures that need to be taken
- 2 regularly review these risk assessments, take account of any changes
- 3 consult with their employees on these risk assessments.
- 4 record the significant findings of the risk assessments and the measures taken to eliminate or control exposure to noise
- 5 ensure that their exposure to noise is either eliminated at source or, where this is not reasonably practicable, reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable.
- 6 make personal hearing protectors available to any employee exposed to noise
- 7 designate hearing protection zones where noise is likely to be at or above an upper exposure action value
- 8 maintain and repair hearing protection such that it is in a good state and efficient working order

Responsibilities of Employees under the above Regulations

Employees must

- 1 make full and proper use of personal hearing protectors provided to them
- 2 report any defect discovered in any personal hearing protectors to her/his employer as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Elimination / Control of Exposure to Noise

The actions that should be taken in order to reduce employee exposure to below the exposure limits are as follows:

Elimination – Wherever possible excessive sources of noise should be eliminated.

Quieter Equipment – Where the above is not possible, attention must be given to attenuating as much of the noise, liberated by all of the items of equipment producing noise, as is reasonably practicable. This could include a mixture of plant maintenance, installation of noise reduction mountings, use of acoustic absorption materials and reflection/deflection and absorption techniques which may all yield some noise reduction in the area of concern. Longer term, replacement of the facilities or equipment liberating noise should be considered wherever possible employing low noise equipment.

Work Places – Where the above cannot be achieved then consideration should be given to employing acoustic / noise attenuating techniques within the workplace so as to reduce noise below the Lower Action Level

Work Practices – should be studied to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that they do not contribute to the noise levels and also to examine how they may be changed so as to reduce the level and duration of exposure to high noise levels.

Rest Facilities – It should be ensured that rest facilities which are, as far as is reasonably practicable free from excessive noise, are available for use by any operatives that have to work within high noise environments. More importantly it should be ensured that these facilities are actually used.

Information, Instruction and Training – All operatives working within high noise areas should be provided with information instruction and training with regard to: -

- 1 to the nature of the risks presented by the plant and equipment that they are using
- 2 the control measures that have been put in place to prevent over exposed to noise
- 3 the meaning of the exposure limit and upper and lower exposure action values
- 4 the significant findings of the noise risk assessments that have been carried out, the results of any measurements taken and a practical explanation as to what these findings and measurements mean
- 5 the availability, suitability and usage of hearing protectors
- 6 why and how to detect and report signs of hearing damage
- 7 their entitlement to health surveillance and its purpose
- 8 the safe working practices that need to be followed to minimise exposure to noise
- 9 the collective results of any health surveillance programmes

Maintenance Programmes – The maintenance and replacement programmes for the work equipment measured during any such noise survey and also in respect of any hearing protection that has been defined for use should in relation to this work should be reviewed following any such survey and thereafter at regular intervals to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose

Limitation of Duration and/or Intensity – Wherever possible action should be taken to limit the duration and intensity of exposure to any noise sources above the Lower Exposure Value

Hearing Protection – Only as a last resort should hearing protection be resorted to. Wherever possible noise should either be eliminated, controlled at source or along its transmission path. However where all actions taken still do not enable the control of noise to below the Lower Exposure Value then hearing protection must be provided. The provision of hearing protection should not be seen as a final solution but as a stop-gap until better levels of noise control can be found and implemented.

Noise levels generated by Company plant and equipment will be kept as low as reasonably practicable in compliance with The Construction Plant and Equipment (Harmonisation of Noise) Regulations 1985.

Suitable and sufficient hearing protection will be provided to all employees where necessary along with adequate instruction and training on the use and maintenance of such equipment.

Where "Hearing Protection Zones" have been clearly identified on site following assessment, employees will be required to wear hearing protection in any such zone.