

Safety Management Standard

Noise at Work

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Purpose and Outcomes	4
3.0 Definitions Used	4
4.0 The Law	5
5.0 Key Responsibilities / Duties	7
6.0 Standards	9
6.1 Risk Assessment	9
6.2 Exposure Monitoring	10
6.3 Health Surveillance	10
7.0 Information, Instruction, Training and Supervision	11
8.0 Monitoring & Review	11
9.0 Further Information	12

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1.0. Introduction

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust recognises its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) 1974, and The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 and The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 to provide suitable arrangements to protect workers from noise.

2.0. Purpose and Outcome

This Safety Management Standard (SMS) supplements the Trust Health and Safety Policy and is a guide for managers in protecting workers from noise.

3.0. Definitions Used

Noise	Noise is unwanted sound which has the potential to cause injury.
Decibel	A unit for measuring the loudness of sound
Lower exposure action value (decibels)	A daily or weekly average noise exposure level of 80 decibels dB(A), at which the employer has to provide information and training and make hearing protection available.
Upper exposure action value (decibels)	A daily or weekly average noise exposure of 85 decibels dB(A), at which the employer is required to assess the risk to workers' health and take reasonably practicable measures to reduce noise exposure, such as engineering controls or other technical measures.
Exposure Limit	<p>Legal limit on the levels of noise to which staff may be exposed - 87 decibels dB(A) for daily or weekly personal noise exposure.</p> <p>To comply with the exposure limits you must ensure that workers must not be exposed, taking account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection.</p>
Health Surveillance	Monitoring employees hearing (hearing tests) where a risk assessment has identified risks to their health and safety.

4.0. Law

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (the 'Noise Regulations')

require you to eliminate or reduce risks to health and safety from noise at work. The aim of the Noise Regulations is to ensure that workers' hearing is protected from excessive noise at their place of work, which could cause them to lose their hearing and/or to suffer from tinnitus (permanent ringing in the ears).

Depending on the level of risk, you should:

- Take action to reduce the noise exposure; and also provide staff with personal hearing protection.

Other duties under the Regulations include the need to:

- make sure the legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded
- maintain and ensure the use of equipment you provide to control noise risks
- provide staff with information, instruction and training
- carry out health surveillance (monitor workers' hearing ability)

The Regulations apply where work activities expose staff at work (Trust employees or other workers affected by work activities) to risks to their health and safety from noise.

The Regulations do not apply where people who are not at work are exposed to risks to their health and safety from noise related to work activities; however, the general duties of section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 may apply in such cases.

Regulation 9 states that (health surveillance) shall not extend to persons who are not employees.

Regulation 10 (information, instruction and training) shall not extend to persons who are not employees, unless those persons are present at the workplace where the work is being carried out.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW)

Regulation 3 places a legal duty on all employers to assess the health and safety risks that their employees are exposed to whilst at work. Once the risks have been assessed, the employer is then required to put in place the appropriate health and safety measures to control those identified risks.

Schedule 1 shall include consideration of:

- 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 employees, such 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 systems
- limitation of the duration and intensity of exposure to noise
- appropriate work schedules with adequate rest periods

Regulation 5 states that every employer shall make and give effect to such arrangements as are appropriate, having regard to the nature of activities and the size of undertaking for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures.

Regulation 6 states that every employer shall ensure that employees are provided with such health surveillance as is appropriate having regard to the risks to their health and safety which are identified by the assessment.

Regulation 10 requires employers to provide comprehensible and relevant information to their employees on:

- the risks to their health and safety identified by the risk assessment
- on the preventive and protective measures

Regulation 14 states that:

- employees must use equipment and materials in accordance with instruction and training given and in compliance with relevant statutory provisions
- employees must inform employers or the workplace safety representative about any serious or immediate health and safety dangers or any shortcomings in the employer's health and safety arrangements

Other laws that cover noise at work are:

The Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999
Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992

5.0. Key Responsibilities / Duties

Employers' Responsibilities

- employers must carry out a general risk assessment for their employees to assess all health and safety risks they are exposed to while at work. As part of that process, employers should consider all employees, including bank, locum, agency and contractors assessing the risks that may arise from any process or working condition
- ensure that employees are not exposed to noise above an exposure limit value
- if an exposure limit value is exceeded forthwith:
 - i. reduce exposure to noise to below the exposure limit value
 - ii. identify the reason for that exposure limit value being exceeded
 - iii. modify the organisational and technical measures taken in accordance regulations 7 and 8 (1) of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 to prevent it being exceeded again
- University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust must assess and identify measures to eliminate or reduce risks from exposure to noise so that we can protect the hearing of employees.
- The use of ISO 45001 (Hierarchy of Risk Controls) must be considered where noise may be a factor in the duty being performed. It suggests a step-by-step approach using the hierarchy of controls to enhance occupational health and safety and reduce or control risks:
 - **Eliminate the Risk:** This is the first step to control risk by avoiding the risk altogether. This calls for stopping or not starting the activities itself, which may be cause of potential risk.
 - **Substitute the risk:** Eliminating the risk may not always be possible. In such cases, the next level of control should be considered. This involves searching for another method that is less risky.

- **Engineering Controls:** This step focuses on applying collective protective measures such as replacing equipment or making related physical changes at the noise source.
- **Administrative Controls:** This involves providing information, instruction, training, or supervision for the risks involved.
- **Personal Protective Equipment:** If the risk still remains, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be used.

Where the risks are low, the actions taken may be simple and inexpensive, but where the risks are high, they should be managed by using a prioritised noise-control action plan.

UHDB must consult with the employees concerned or their representatives shall be consulted on the measures to be taken to meet the requirements of the Control of Noise Regulation 2005.

Managers Responsibilities

- ensure that risk assessments are carried out for work activities under their supervision and are recorded
- ensure appropriate control measures are adhered to (hearing protection is provided and used where required)
- communicate the findings of risks assessment to staff and others under their management
- act on the findings of exposure monitoring where necessary
- ensure information, training and health surveillance is provided
- review processes and control measures if anything changes that may affect the noise exposures

Employees Duties

- make full and proper use of personal hearing protectors provided to them
- inspect control measures before use and report defects or failures to line managers
- attend appointments for health surveillance if it has been deemed necessary
- attend training courses when requested.

6.0 Standards

The following standards must be adhered to:

6.1. Risk Assessment

Wherever there is noise at work you should be looking for alternative processes, equipment and/or working methods which would make the work quieter or mean people are exposed for shorter times.

You will probably need to do something about the noise if any of the following apply:

- the noise is intrusive – for example, a vacuum cleaner or a crowded restaurant – or worse than intrusive, for most of the working day
- employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2 m apart for at least part of the day
- employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day
- a department is one known to have noisy tasks
- there are noises due to impacts (such as hammering etc)

If any of the above statements apply, it is likely you will need to take some further action. You should carry out a risk assessment to decide what action is needed and develop a plan.

A risk assessment means more than just taking measurements of noise – measurements may not even be necessary.

Your risk assessment should identify where there may be a risk from noise and who is likely to be affected, include:

- risks to health and risks to safety
- contain an estimate of staff exposures to noise - a daily combination of 'how loud' and 'how long exposed' for the various noises that a person is exposed to in a working day
- identify any staff who are at particular risk and/or need to be provided with health surveillance
- identify whether noise-control measures and/or personal hearing protection are needed, or whether working practices are safe

You must record the findings of your risk assessment. You must also record the action you have taken, or intend to take, to comply with the law.

You should review your risk assessment if circumstances change or if it is no longer valid, for example if the work changes and this affects workers' noise exposure, or there are changes to the availability, applicability or cost of noise-control measures.

You should not leave it for more than about two years without checking whether a review is needed.

6.2. Exposure Monitoring

The level at which employers must provide hearing protection and hearing protection zones is 85 dB(A) (daily or weekly average exposure) and the level at which employers must assess the risk to workers' health and provide them with information and training is 80 dB(A).

A noise assessment may not always need a measurement. For example, if only one activity at the workplace (e.g., the use of a single machine) involves noise above 85 dB(A) and the manufacturer has provided information about the machine's noise levels when it is operated in particular ways, then a sufficient assessment can be made without measurement.

More complex situations may require measurement to accurately determine a worker's exposure to noise, such as workplaces with variable noise levels over a shift and jobs where workers move in and out of noisy areas. In doing so noise exposure monitoring may well be required.

For further advice on exposure monitoring and noise assessments, please contact the Health and Safety Team.

6.3. Health Surveillance

Health surveillance for hearing damage usually means:

- regular hearing checks in controlled conditions
- telling employees about the results of their hearing checks
- keeping health records
- ensuring employees are examined by a doctor where hearing damage is identified.

For further advice on health surveillance, please contact the Health and Safety and /or Occupational Health team or please see the Health Surveillance Safety Management Standard [opac-retrieve-file.pl \(koha-ptfs.co.uk\)](http://opac-retrieve-file.pl(koha-ptfs.co.uk))

7.0. Information, Instruction, Training and Supervision

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust shall provide training where employees are exposed to noise which is likely to be at or above a lower exposure action value (daily or weekly exposure of 80 dB(A), peak sound pressure of 135 dB(C)).

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust shall ensure that any person, whether or not his employee, who carries out work in connection with the employer's duties under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 has suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.

Suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training and shall include:

- the nature of risks from exposure to noise
- the organisational and technical measures taken in order to comply with the requirements of regulation 6 of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- the exposure limit values, and upper and lower exposure action values set out in regulation 4 of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- the significant findings of the risk assessment, including any measurements taken, with an explanation of those findings
- the availability and provision of personal hearing protectors under regulation 7 and their correct use in accordance with regulation 8(2) of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- why and how to detect and report signs of hearing damage
- the entitlement to health surveillance under regulation 9 of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and its purposes
- safe working practices to minimise exposure to noise
- the collective results of any health surveillance undertaken in accordance with regulation 9

8.0. Monitoring & Review

This Safety Management Standard will be regularly monitored and reviewed by the Health and Safety Team to:

- ensure it continues to comply with legislation
- ensure that it is reasonably practicable to implement to all those concerned within the Trust

9.0. Further information

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has a range of information on Noise at Work. Information is available at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/advice.htm>

For information on specific risks consult one of our other health & safety management standards or use the search function at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

For further advice, please contact the Health and Safety Team.

We hope you find this SMS useful; if you require further information, please contact one of the Health and Safety Team:



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