

Noise at Work

Noise in the workplace can cause hearing damage when it occurs at high volumes or for long periods. This can result in temporary or even permanent hearing loss. The Labour Force Survey estimated 17,000 workers with work-related hearing problems from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require **employers to prevent** or reduce risks to health and safety from **exposure to noise at work**. They set legal limits for exposure to noise at work. These limits are known as exposure limits and action values. (For ROI see Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 Chapter 1 of Part 5: Noise at work. For NI see Control of Noise at Work Northern Ireland Regulations 2006).

Duties of employers

- Carry out a risk assessment for employees' exposure to noise at work.
- Take appropriate action to reduce employees' exposure to noise at work.
- Provide hearing protection for employees if noise cannot be avoided or controlled by other means.
- Make sure the legal noise limits set out in the Regulations are not exceeded.
- Provide employees with information, instruction and training in relation to noise at work.
- Carry out health surveillance where a risk to health has been found.



Controlling exposure to noise in the workplace

- Redesign the workplace to minimise exposure to noise.
- Change to a quieter process or quieter equipment.
- Include engineering controls such as damping, anti-vibration mounts, silencers, materials which easily absorb noise etc.
- Change the layout of the workplace so that the workflow is designed to minimise exposure to noise, and time in noisy areas is limited.
- As a last resort, personal protective equipment can be provided to employees to control exposure to noise at work.

| Activity | dB(A) |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Quiet office | 40 - 60 |
| Normal conversation | 50 - 60 |
| Bulldozer with engine idling | 85 |
| Lathes | 90 |
| Pneumatic drill | 100 |
| Abrasive media blasing | 110 |
| Riveting | 130 |
| Aircraft taking off 25 metres away | 140 |

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Duties of employees

- Follow any instructions and take note of any information and training given by your employer in relation to minimising your exposure to noise.
- Wear any personal protective equipment provided by your employer which protects against exposure to noise at work.
- Report any defects in machinery or equipment that is causing increased noise.

Legislation and resources

- Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
 - For Republic of Ireland, see Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
 - For Northern Ireland, see Control of Noise at Work, Northern Ireland, Regulations 2006
 - Noise at Work: a Brief Guide to Controlling the Risks; INDG362 (rev2) HSE
 - Protect Your Hearing or Lose It! INDG363 (rev2) HSE
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Please read the handout carefully. Answer the following questions and give this page back to the person providing the toolbox talk.

Q: Name three duties that employers have under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations:

A:
.....
.....

Q: Name two duties that employees have under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations:

A:
.....

I have read and understood the information set out above:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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