



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

NOISE AT WORK

Owner	Director of Service Improvement
Responsible Person	Head of Health and Safety
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1. INTRODUCTION

HFRS recognise that the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 applies to its work activities.

The Service will assess any significant noise to which employees are exposed and which is likely to reach the action levels detailed below. Information will be given to employees regarding their exposure to noise hazard and the action required to keep any risk to a minimum.

If excessive noise levels are identified in the workplace, the Service will endeavour to reduce the level of noise where reasonably practicable. However, if personnel must work in areas where noise has been identified as an unavoidable hazard, they will be provided with hearing protection.

Where noise reduction controls or hearing protection is employed, the Service and the individual will ensure that equipment is kept in good condition and that it is used correctly.

2. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and a commitment, to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services nor in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees and service users.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

The measurement of noise is a specialist subject and personnel within the Health and Safety Section are trained to carry out noise assessments. The Service will also employ competent external consultants when required.

Anyone who considers that noise levels are excessive should raise the issue with their line manager, who should request a noise assessment via the Health and Safety Section.

The principal objectives of noise measurement are:

- To identify equipment, operations and activities that give rise to high noise levels.
- To provide sufficient data to enable noise exposure of personnel to be determined.
- To identify when and where noise control or hearing protection is required.
- To provide information to allow the formulation of control strategies, that minimises the effects of noise, and complies with the Noise at Work Regulations.

- To provide recommendations to reduce noise where practical.
- To recommend suitable ear protection equipment where necessary.

4. ACTION VALUES

The Noise at Work Regulations defines *action values* which determine the control measures that need to be implemented. These are:

- *The lower action value (LAV)* means a daily personal noise exposure of 80dB(A) or a *peak sound pressure* of 135dB(C);
- *The upper action value (UAV)* means a daily personal noise exposure of 85dB(A) or a *peak sound pressure* of 137dB(C);
- *The exposure limit values (ELVs)* means a daily or weekly personal exposure of 87dB(A) or a *peak sound pressure* of 140dB(C).

These levels will be measured and determined using specialist equipment.

5. REDUCING THE RISK

Note: Noise damage to the hearing can be a slow and insidious process which may take years before any obvious effect is noticeable. An immediate effect will not be felt, and employees may feel that the potential for hearing damage is being exaggerated. This is not the case and employees should be aware that their hearing is at risk if they do not adhere to the instructions of the Service with regard to hearing protection.

Where the assessment shows noise exposure is at or above any of the action levels instruction and information will be issued to affected personnel ensuring that they know there is a noise hazard and what they should do to keep the risk to a minimum.

Where reasonably practicable, noise levels will be controlled at source.

Noise will be considered at the planning stage of any new development or purchase of equipment and machinery. Suppliers of equipment and machinery will be asked to provide an assessment of the noise exposure of potential operators during the procurement process.

Before equipment is issued for use, when necessary, a noise assessment will be carried out by the Section introducing the equipment.

Where practical, consideration will also be given to reducing the number of personnel exposed to the noise and the duration to which they are exposed to it.

Where avoidance or reduction of noise is not reasonably practicable ear protection will be provided.

Between the first and second action levels, ear protection will be freely available and personnel will be informed that unless they wear the protection, there is some risk to their hearing.

Where noise levels exceed the second action level, use of ear protection is compulsory. Ear protection zones will be marked where reasonably practicable, although this is not possible on the incident ground. Operational equipment will be marked with warning signs to indicate that ear protection is required and personnel working on the incident ground will be supervised. Dynamic risk assessment on the incident ground may determine that ear protection should be worn.

All work equipment will be maintained in good condition through standard tests, maintenance and replacement systems.

6. EMPLOYEE'S DUTIES

Regulation 8(2) of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 states that every employee shall:

- Make full and proper use of personnel hearing protectors provided to them by their employer in compliance with regulation 7 (2) and of any other control measures provided by their employer in compliance with their duties under these Regulations: and
- If they discover any defect in any personal hearing protectors or other control measures as specified in sub-paragraph (a) report it to their employer as soon as is practicable.

Regulation 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places the following duties on all employees:

- Using the equipment, safe systems of work and procedures provided by the Service in accordance with training and instruction given.
- Informing their line manager without delay of any situation which may present a serious and imminent danger.
- Notifying their line manager of any shortcoming in the health and safety arrangements.

7. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING

The Service employs a system of supervision for all activities involving risk to personnel.

In accordance with HSE Guidance Note INDG362 and to meet the duties of Regulation 5 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, Occupational Health maintains audiometry testing within the Health Surveillance programme.

The level of supervision will depend on the risk involved and the competence and abilities of personnel.

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8. REVIEW

Assessments will be reviewed annually and on other occasions that include:

- A change in legislation.
- A change in control measures.
- A significant change in the work carried out or the environment it is in carried out.
- New technology.
- Any other reasons to suspect that the original assessment is no longer valid or could be improved upon.

**If you require further guidance on this document, please contact the
Health, Safety & Environment Section**