



**TYSERS**  
UK DIVISION

# Tyser & Co Limited

International Insurance & Risk Management Solutions

## Client Briefing No: 21

# Hear This – New Noise Regulations for 2006

### Introduction

Health and Safety issues arising from exposure to noise at work are currently covered by the Noise At Work Regulations 1989, which came into force at the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1990. This will change however with the new 2003 European Directive which will result in additional noise regulations for 2006.

It is estimated by the UK Medical Research Council, that up to 500,000 people in the United Kingdom suffer from work related hearing difficulties and that 170,000 people suffer deafness, tinnitus or other ear conditions as a result of exposure to noise at work.

The noise levels that are relevant are those that are taken at the employees ear itself, and are not simply the noise level in decibels but also the employees daily and weekly dose of noise. Additional points to note are that;

1. The regulations also apply to an employee who may only be intermittently exposed to noise as this may put them above the action threshold.
2. Issuing personal protective equipment i.e. ear defenders is not on its own necessarily sufficient, it must be ensured that the equipment is doing its job.

### What are the essentials of noise regulations?

- Employers have a legal responsibility to protect the hearing of their employees.
- Damage to hearing from exposure to noise at work is preventable.
- The risk can be controlled by good management.
- Employers must reduce the risk of damage to hearing and take specific action where the exposure to their employees is likely to be at or above any of three “action levels” (see next section).

If people at work have difficulty at being heard clearly by someone only two metres away, you may well have a noise problem at work !

Exposure to noise occurs not only in the traditional industries such as manufacturing and construction, but also woodworking, printing, textile, food production and music and entertainment.

## **The new noise action levels under the proposed new regulations**

First action level = 85dB(A) – 80dB(A) (Decibel Units) and peak sound pressures of 112 Pascals.

At this level ear protection must be made available, and information and training given to employees. Audiometric testing is compulsory where there may be a risk of hearing damage.

Action level two = 90 dB(A) – 85 dB(A) and peak sound pressure 140 Pascals.

At this level employees must wear hearing protection, and control measures to reduce noise levels must be in force. Ear protection zones with controlled access should be set up where the risk of exposure justifies this.

Action level three = a personal noise exposure of 87dB(A).

Employers must ensure that the weekly noise exposure level, taking into account the level of hearing protection offered by personal protection equipment does not exceed this limit.

## **What to do next**

- T** Make a diary of the implementation date of these new regulations and understand what is required under them.
- T** Look at your current risk assessment procedures in the context of the new regulations and identify any gaps.
- T** Take whatever steps are necessary under the new regulations to prevent or control noise risk.

- T** Where possible control or even eliminate noise at source.
- T** Provide all necessary information and training to employees.
- T** Regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of your noise related health and safety programme.

## **Conclusion**

Health and safety understanding and practices constantly move on as the HSE strive for greater safety at work.

Employees understandings of risk have also (hopefully) progressed from some years ago when the workforce of a Tyser client complained to management that the “music needed to be turned up to full as they couldn’t hear it through their ear defenders worn to protect against the already high noise levels in the works”.

For further information or if you wish to discuss any of these issues, please get in touch with your usual Tyser contact.



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