



## Noise at Work

### Occupational Noise

Excessive noise levels, either in terms of duration, frequency or level can present a risk of injury to employees. Noise induced hearing loss occurs gradually and is directly related to the degree of noise exposure. Employees may suffer temporary hearing loss after leaving a noisy environment. Although hearing returns after a few hours, it should not be ignored as it is a sign that continued exposure could result in permanent damage. Prolonged exposure to high noise levels can cause serious and irreversible hearing damage. Permanent hearing loss can also be caused immediately by an extremely loud explosive noise such as from cartridge operated machines.

Another condition of hearing damage is tinnitus which is a ringing, buzzing or whistling in the ears. This can be disturbing as it affects the ability of the individual to conduct daily activities and also effects sleep patterns.

All Sites within Premier Technical Services Group PLC and its sub divisions are required to identify, assess and control risks relating to noise exposure. An assessment of the degree of noise exposure is required and where identified, control measures implemented.

Management must identify work places or situations at the Sites where Employees are liable to be exposed to high noise levels (i.e. above 80 dBs). As a general guide, if people have to shout or have difficulty being understood by someone about 2 metres away, it is likely that noise levels are in excess of 80 dBs.

Management must conduct an informal assessment of noise to identify the areas that may be exposing employees to excessive noise. Management must maintain a record of any informal assessments that are conducted on site.

Where there is doubt as to whether the levels are below the first action level, a formal noise survey will be required.

Noise surveys should only be conducted by a competent person who has received appropriate training.

Where the noise survey indicates that any colleague is liable to receive a daily personal noise exposure in excess of 80 dB (A) (Lep, d) then a hearing protection programme should be initiated, details of which will depend upon the severity of the noise problem. The programme may include the following elements:

- Engineering controls to reduce noise at source;
- Enclosure, delineation of ear protection zones; and
- Provision of hearing protectors.

Employees who are required to use hearing protectors must make full and proper use of them and to report any defects promptly to management. Periodic inspections must be conducted by Sites management to ensure the continuing effectiveness of the hearing protection.

Vulnerable Employees will receive information, instruction and training about risks to hearing and the measures necessary to minimise the risk. The training should include the correct use of the hearing protection especially where it is used in

conjunction with other PPE, maintenance and storage of the hearing protection and recognition of the warning signs.

Management are responsible for ensuring all mandatory hearing protection is being worn in designated areas.

All noise control measures and personal protective equipment are to be properly maintained and will be repaired or replaced when necessary.

Competent employees will undertake to carry out regular reviews of the feasibility of further noise reduction, taking account of developments in noise control techniques.

## **Environmental Noise**

At many of our locations there is the potential for the noise generated by our activities to create a nuisance to neighbouring communities and businesses, if this noise is not proactively managed. In some cases the potential for noise has been recognised by local authorities prior to operational start up by way of a restriction contained in planning permissions.

If a Site perceives there to be an issue with noise generated by our operations, or there is potential for noise to become an issue then the sites should monitor the noise at sites boundaries and compare that with background noise levels. All Sites should establish procedures for dealing with noise complaints from the local community and businesses. Any complaints should be dealt with courteously and efficiently. A 'Good Neighbour' policy should be developed, implemented and maintained. A log should be kept of any noise complaints and any correspondence should be documented and preserved.

Should a significant noise issue be found at a Sites then the Sites management should take the best practicable measure to remove or reduce the noise problem. Ongoing monitoring should be undertaken to ensure that the noise problem does not continue.

Where areas of work may have particular disturbing effect on neighbours we will apply for a section 61 consent under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in order to agree working hours and noise emission control measures

## **Related Documents**

HSE Guidance Document INDG362 Noise at Work



[Signed for and on behalf of the company]

T Wilcock – Group Safety, Health and Environment Manager