

MANAGEMENT OF NOISE AT WORK

Management of Noise at Work

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Health and Safety Policy			

Amendment History

Issue	Status	Date	Reason for Change	Authorised

Please note:

If you require a copy of this procedure in an alternative format (for example Large Print, Easy Read) or would like any assistance in relation to the content of this policy, please contact the Human Resources (HR) team on 01803 656680.

Management of Noise at Work**1.0 Purpose and Application**

Noise is part of everyday life, but too much noise can cause permanent and disabling hearing damage. This can be hearing loss that gets worse over time, damage caused by sudden, extremely loud noises, or tinnitus (permanent ringing in the ears).

The Noise Regulations are designed to protect staff against noise induced hearing damage or loss. If noise causes other risks such as poor communication of alarms, information, or distraction, irritation etc then these should be dealt with under the general health and safety risk assessment.

This policy applies to all activities carried out by the Trusts in Trusts owned, leased or managed premises. However it is likely that specific steps due to the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 will only be required in the following situations:

- Generator rooms and compressor rooms (when the plant is in operation)
- The main Boiler house
- Engineering and carpenters workshops – during defined activity
- Grounds maintenance operations
- Activities using power tools carried out by Estates and Facilities Management (EFM) staff or contractors

The Trusts will manage their workplaces and activities in accordance with the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 to minimise the risk of Noise Induced Hearing Loss.

2.0 Responsibilities**2.1 Director of Estates and Commercial Development**

The Director of Estates and Commercial Development is responsible for ensuring that the Trust complies with the Noise at Work Regulations by:

- Ensuring that appropriate assessments are carried out and recorded for all activities where noise exposure is a risk
- Providing competent technical advice regarding noise assessment and control measures

2.2 Departmental Managers

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Managers are responsible for ensuring that where there are concerns assessments are carried out in their areas, including a preliminary noise risk assessment (TSF/S012), a copy of which can be seen at Appendix 1. If this initial assessment indicates that there is a problem, they are responsible for contacting the EFM department to arrange an appropriate risk assessment.

Where employees are exposed to noise which is likely to be at or above the lower exposure action value, managers shall provide those employees with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.

2.3 Employees

Are responsible for complying with any measures implemented by the Trusts, including the wearing of any appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and the attendance of health surveillance appointments.

3.0 Procedures**3.1 Action levels**

The exposure action values are the levels of exposure to noise at which the Trusts are required to take certain actions.

The lower exposure action values are:

- A daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80 dB (A-weighted)
- A peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C-weighted)

The upper exposure action values are:

- A daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85 dB (A-weighted)
- A peak sound pressure of 137 dB (C-weighted)

Where the exposure of an employee to noise varies markedly from day to day, an employer may use weekly personal noise exposure in place of daily personal noise exposure for the purpose of compliance with the Regulations

3.2 Risk assessments

Managers should take all reasonably practicable steps to reduce exposure to noise in the working environment and must contact the EFM department if they identify a significant risk of Noise Induced Hearing Loss so that a full noise assessment can be organised

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The full noise risk assessment will include assessing workers exposure to noise including the noise level and duration of exposure using a Sound Level Meter, in order to develop an action plan to control the risks identified.

3.4 Hearing Protection

Control measures may include noise control at source, organisational control and purchasing quieter tools and machinery. The provision of hearing protection should be considered only as a final resort.

If the Trusts carries out work which is likely to expose any employees to noise at or above a lower exposure action value they must make personal hearing protectors available upon request to any employee who is so exposed.

If the Trusts are unable by other means to reduce the levels of noise to which an employee is likely to be exposed to below an upper exposure action value, he shall provide personal hearing protectors to any employee who is so exposed.

If in any area of the workplace under the control of the Trusts an employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value for any reason the employer shall ensure that:

- The area is designated a Hearing Protection Zone
- The area is demarcated and identified by means of the sign specified for the purpose of indicating that ear protection must be worn
- Access to the area is restricted where this is practicable and the risk from exposure justifies it, and shall ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that no employee enters that area unless that employee is wearing personal hearing protectors.

Any personal hearing protectors made available shall be selected by the Trust so as to eliminate the risk to hearing or to reduce the risk to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

Where hearing protection is provided employees must wear it properly, and monitored to ensure they wear it all the time when they are doing noisy work, and when they are in hearing protection zones. Taking it off even for a short while really reduces the overall protection they get, meaning their hearing could still be damaged.

Any problems with noise-control devices or hearing protection must be reported straight away.

Hearing protection such as earmuffs and earplugs is the last line of defence against damage. The Trusts should provide it, and train employees how to use it and how to get replacements. There are many different types and designs available, and managers should consult employees and offer a choice.

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Earmuffs - They should totally cover the ears, fit tightly and have no gaps around the seals. Hair, jewellery, glasses, hats etc must not interfere with the seal. The seals and the insides must be kept clean. The headband must not be stretched – the tension is crucial to protection. Helmet-mounted earmuffs can need particular care to get a good seal around the ears.

Earplugs - They go right in the ear canal, not just across it. Fitting them should be practiced and help given if required. Hands should be clean before you fit earplugs, and they must not be shared. Some types you use only once, others can be re-used and even washed – make sure employees know which type they have.

Semi-inserts/canal caps - These are held in or across the ear canal by a band, usually plastic. Every time they are put on the seal must be checked and the same general advice as for earplugs should be followed and making sure any band keeps its tension.

4.0 Health Surveillance

If the full noise assessment indicates that there is a risk to the health of our employees who are, or liable to be regular exposed to noise above the upper exposure action value the Trusts shall ensure that they are placed under suitable health surveillance, regardless of the hearing protection provided

Health surveillance will also be required for individuals regularly exposed to the lower exposure action value and who have already have a hearing deficiency or who have a family history of early deafness

The aim of a noise health surveillance programme is to safeguard employees but also to check the long term effectiveness of control measures. Health surveillance involves regular hearing checks to measure the sensitivity of hearing over a range of sound frequencies. Employees will be informed about the results of the hearing tests and records kept.

5.0 References**5.1 References and further reading**

- The Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- HTM 08-01: Acoustics
- HSE: Protect your Hearing or Lose it INDG 363

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Further information and advice is available from the Trusts Health and Safety Manager, Occupational Health and the EFM Department.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Copy Preliminary Noise Risk Assessment Form TSF/S011 (Separate Document)

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Appendix 1



South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust &
Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care NHS Trust

Trust Standard Form

Preliminary Noise Assessment Form

This forms part of the general risk assessment of your work activities and Managers should answer each question to identify if a full Noise Risk Assessment needs to be carried out.

Name of Manager:		Date:	
Location/Dept:			

If you answer 'Yes' to any of the questions below you should contact Estates for a full noise risk assessment and give your employees at risk the Noise Related Health Questionnaire.

	Consider	YES	NO
1.	Do you work in a noisy environment? <i>e.g. maintenance, manufacturing, dentistry, surgical, waste, etc</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Do your employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day in total?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Are there noises due to impact (such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools, drills, etc)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Are there areas of the workplace where noise levels could interfere with warning or danger signals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Are employees exposed to noise which makes it necessary to shout to talk to someone 1 metre away, for more than about half an hour per day in total?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Are employees exposed to noise which makes it necessary to shout to talk to someone 2 metres away, for more than 2 hours per day in total?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Is conversation at 2 metres possible, but noise is intrusive-comparable to a busy street or crowded restaurant- for more than 6 hours per day in total?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed: