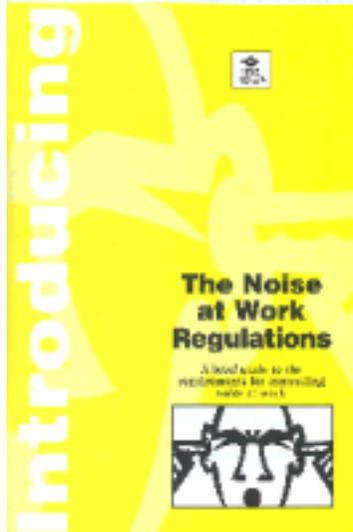


Noise at Work



Exposure to high noise levels can cause incurable hearing damage. The important factors are the noise level, given in decibels units as dB(A) and how long a person is exposed to the noise.

The damage involves a loss of hearing ability, possibly made worse by permanent tinnitus (“ringing in the ears”) and sufferers can find it difficult to distinguish words clearly. Noise at work can also cause other problems such as disturbance, interference with speech and stress.

The Noise at Work Regulations 1989 require employers to reduce the risk of hearing damage to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

- ✓ The employer should decide if there is a problem. If people have to shout or have difficulty being understood by someone about 2 metres away then there could be a problem.
- ✓ If there is a problem then a Noise Assessment needs to be carried out by a competent person and a record kept
- ✓ If the noise level is found to be 85dB(A) or more then. Employees should be supplied with adequate information, instruction and training about the risks to hearing, what they should do to minimise the risk, and how they can obtain ear defenders and use them correctly. In addition the employer should create and Ear Protection Zones where ear defenders should be worn.
- ✓ The ear defenders provided should be suitable for the noise level identified and should be properly maintained and repaired.
- ✓ Where the noise level is found to be 90 dB(A) or more then the employer should, so far as is reasonably practicable, reduce the exposure to noise, by other methods other than by the use of ear defenders.

Detailed information is available in the H.S.E. guidance “Reducing noise at work. Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations 1989 ISBN 0 7176 1511 1 available from any H.M.S.O.