

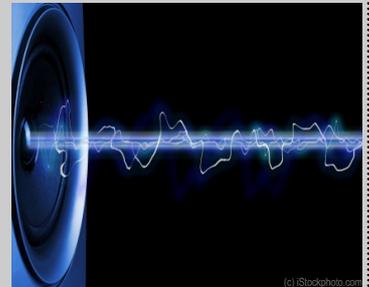


NOISE AT WORK REGULATIONS

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 protecting workers in the music and entertainment sectors came into force in April 2008, as opposed to April 2006 for all other industry sectors. The European Directive (2003/10/EC) on which the Noise Regulations are based allowed the music and entertainment sectors a two year transitional period. This is due to music being different in that it is deliberately created for enjoyment and therefore more practical guidelines are necessary to help anyone working in the music and entertainment sectors to protect their hearing.

The noise regulations are based on European Union Directives requiring similar basic laws throughout the Union on protecting workers from the health risks caused by noise.

The 2005 Regulations replaced the 1989 Noise Regulations and introduced new requirements for action to be taken by employers. The 2005 Noise Regulations noise exposure values requiring action were reduced by 5dB, meaning that places of work which previously only exceeded the First Action Level would now effectively exceed the Upper Action Value, and some which previously did not exceed any Action Level could be exceeding the Lower Action Level. Also, Noise Regulations now require health surveillance (hearing checks) for workers regularly exposed to noise levels above 85dB(A).



The 2005 Regulations use Upper and Lower Exposure Action Values to assess the severity of the noise exposure and what subsequent procedures need to be undertaken by the employer under law to comply with the regulations.

The Action Values as defined by the $L_{EP,d}$ or $L_{EP,w}$ (the worker's daily or weekly exposure to noise at work, normalised to an 8 hour day or 5 day week respectively) and peak sound pressure level as stated in the 2005 Noise Regulations are detailed in the table below.

Daily or weekly personal average noise exposure	Noise level	Peak sound pressure level	Actions
Lower Exposure Action Values	80dB(A)	135dB(C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake risk assessment. If any employees are identified as being particularly susceptible to noise, health surveillance should be implemented; Make hearing protection available; Establish a maintenance programme for equipment to reduce noise risk such as noise limiters and hearing protection; Provide training on noise induced hearing loss.
Upper Exposure Action Values	85dB(A)	137dB(C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and implement a programme of control measures; If these measures are not sufficient to reduce the exposure to below 85dB(A) then:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable hearing protection must be worn and; Health surveillance programme implemented.
Exposure Limit Values	87dB(A)	140dB(C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce to below Limit Values (allowed to take hearing protection into account).

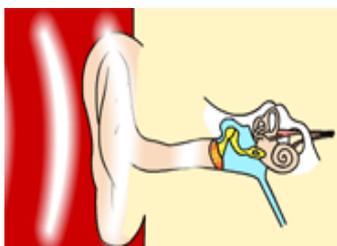
Hearing Loss



Noise can be more than just annoying, it can be dangerous. The noise regulations are in force to protect workers from noise induced hearing loss.

Before noise regulations were in force, many factory workers were exposed to high levels of noise for many years and as a result, workers often experienced hearing loss over time.

Hearing deteriorates over time for everyone (age related hearing loss), however, exposure to noise over certain levels exacerbates the process.



Tinnitus

Another detrimental effect that could possibly be caused by exposure to loud noise is a condition called Tinnitus, which is from the Latin word for "ringing".

Tinnitus is the perception of sound in the absence of corresponding external sound.

It is usually perceived as a ringing noise, but in some cases it can be a high pitched whining, buzzing, hissing, humming or whooshing. It can be very distressing for the sufferer.

The precise cause of tinnitus is still not fully understood. Experience of tinnitus can be common in all age groups, especially following exposure to loud noise.

With people being exposed to generally higher noise levels in bars, clubs and through headphones etc, consideration of hearing damage is becoming more necessary.

Music and Entertainment

Music and entertainment sectors are defined in the 2005 Noise Regulations as all workplaces where:

- live music is played or;
- recorded music is played in a restaurant, bar, public house, discotheque or nightclub, or alongside live music or a live dramatic or dance performance.

Within the music and entertainment sectors there is often a stigma attached to wearing hearing protection and for many performers it is often not recognised that the noise levels they are being exposed to could cause lasting damage to their hearing.

People in the know i.e. professional musicians, sound engineers, broadcasters etc are aware of the dangers of high noise levels and take necessary precautions of wearing ear plugs.

However, the Regulations now cover employees of nightclubs and bars. Therefore, consideration of the levels of noise that bar and nightclub staff are exposed to must be evaluated and control measures implemented where necessary.

Employers Responsibility

By law, employers must assess and identify measures to eliminate or reduce risks from exposure to noise so that they can protect the hearing of their employees.

Where the risks are low, the actions you take may be simple and inexpensive, but where the risks are high, you should manage them using a prioritised noise-control action plan.

Hann Tucker can help!

To assess the implications for the employer of the 'Control of Noise at Work Regulations' 2005 will require a detailed investigation of workplace noise levels and employee working practices (i.e. individual exposure periods during a normal working day/week).

Hann Tucker Associates has many years experience at undertaking such assessments, and understands the need for the employer to find a practical solution.

Hann Tucker Associates can develop the most pragmatic approach to protecting employees from excessive occupational noise, and to satisfy the Health and Safety Executive Inspectors, by a variety of mitigation techniques.

For more information please contact us at the addresses below.

Hann Tucker Associates, the leading independent UK acoustic consultancy, can provide all the necessary professional advice and assistance in order to ensure your employees are protected from excessive noise and your establishment is in compliance with the new Noise Regulations.

By using the specialist knowledge and expertise we have gained over 35 years of successful acoustic consultancy, suitable cost effective solutions can be provided to ensure satisfactory solutions are achieved.

Hann Tucker Associates

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