

## **Noise at Work – How do I assess the risks?**

### **Do you have a noise problem at work?**

This will depend on how loud the noise is and how long people are exposed to it. As a simple guide you will probably need to do something about the noise if any of the following apply:

- Is the noise intrusive – like a busy street, a vacuum cleaner or a crowded restaurant – for most of the working day?
- Do your employees have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2m apart for at least part of the day?
- Do your employees use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day?
- Do you work in a noisy industry?

### **How do I get started?**

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above questions you will need to assess the risks to decide whether any further action is needed, and plan how you will do it.

The aim of the risk assessment is to help you decide what you need to do to ensure the health and safety of your employees who are exposed to noise. It is more than just taking measurements of noise – sometimes measurements may not even be necessary.

Your risk assessment should:-

- identify where there may be a risk from noise and who is likely to be affected;
- contain a reliable estimate of your employees' exposures, and compare the exposure with the exposure action values and limit values;
- identify what you need to do to comply with the law, for example, whether noise-control measures or hearing protection are needed, and, if so, where and what type; and
- identify any employees who need to be provided with health surveillance and whether any are at particular risk.

### **Estimating Employee's Exposure**

It is essential that you can show that your estimate of employees' exposure is representative of the work that they do. It needs to take account of:

- the work they do or are likely to do;
- the ways in which they do the work; and
- how it might vary from one day to the next.

Your estimate must be based on reliable information, for example, measurements in your own workplace, information from other workplaces similar to yours, or data from suppliers of machinery.

You must record the findings of your risk assessment. You need to record in an action plan anything you identify as being necessary to comply with the law, setting out what you have done and what you are going to do, with a timetable and saying who will be responsible for the work.

Review your risk assessment if circumstances in your workplace change and affect noise exposures. Also review it regularly to make sure that you continue to do all that is reasonably practicable to control the noise risks. Even if it appears that nothing has changed, you should not leave it for more than about two years without checking whether a review is needed.

### **Competence**

You need to make sure that your risk assessment:

- has been drawn up by someone who is competent to carry out the task; and
- is based on advice and information from people who are competent to provide it.

You, or people within your company, may well be competent in some or all areas. You may, however, choose or need to go to external consultants.

### **Further information**

Further information is available in the following HSE publication available from HSE Books or all good bookshops:-

- Controlling noise at work – The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, ISBN Number 0717661644

Or on the Health & Safety Executive Website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Or from South Holland District Council, Community & Neighborhood Services, Safety & Environment Team, 01775 761161