Noise policy

# Noise

To keep our working environment as safe, productive, and positive as possible, it is necessary to have a policy to manage and control noise risks. While the organisation values a collaborative and dynamic workplace, it is essential to prevent excessive noise from becoming a problem for our organisation and staff.

For the purpose of this policy, “noise” is defined as “any unwanted or excessive sound that has the potential to cause harm to an individual’s hearing, physical health, or mental well-being.” This includes workplace noise generated by machinery, equipment, or activities, as well as noise exposure that exceeds legal limits.

The organisation requires all employees to comply with the noise safety policy, including following noise control measures, wearing appropriate hearing protection when required, and reporting noise-related concerns.

# Policy

Excessive noise at work can create a significant hazard for workers. Some workplaces such as construction sites, agricultural sites and manufacturing facilities produce more noise than others which have their own noise management plans implemented. However, we recognise that there are other environments such as offices or yards which must be managed effectively, so that people are not exposed to the potential harm which can arise from working in noisy places.

There are several pieces of legislation which impact on this policy including:

* The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 (the Noise Regulations) which came into force for all industry sectors in Great Britain on 6 April 2006 (except for the music and entertainment sectors where they came into force on 6 April 2008)
* The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 is the primary piece of legislation covering occupational health and safety in Great Britain.

This policy applies to all employees whether they are fully employed, temporary or contracted staff, customer or visitors.

As an employer, the organisation will provide suitable arrangements to limit exposure to loud noise and, where necessary, provide appropriate equipment which helps to reduce the potential for harm to people’s hearing.

It is the organisations policy to ensure noise levels remain below legal exposure levels. This means taking action if daily or weekly personal noise exposure exceeds 80-85 decibels, or where peak sound levels exceed 135 decibels. Where it is not possible to keep sound levels below this threshold it is the responsibility of the organisation to provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and to education and communicate PPE use to all affected employees.

An employee taking any medication should check the list of possible side-effects and inform their line manager in confidence. If necessary, their line manager will then ensure arrangements are made to make sure the

employee’s job is not affected.

# Sources of Noise (tick all that apply)

# Offices

Office environments are typically well within legal noise tolerance levels. Noise in offices will typically be in the 40 to 70 decibel range depending on how many people are present. This will be measured periodically to ensure that there have been no unexpected changes in working noise levels.

The greatest potential for excessive noise during normal operations within an office is from **audio headsets** having their volume turned up too high. The Health and Safety Executive considers that, in general, call handlers using headsets are unlikely to exceed the 80 decibel lower exposure action level providing good practice in the management of noise is followed.

The organisation will provide headsets and systems which use them which have fully adjustable volume controls. This will enable them to be used at a sound level which is comfortable for the user and protects them from harm.

If a headset breaks, or is found not to be adjustable, a new headset must be provided by the organisation at no cost to the employee.

Ensuring that headsets are at a comfortable noise level is also important as it will enable you to hear other sounds like a fire evacuation alarm, or a smoke alarm if you are working at home.

# Construction Sites

Noise levels on construction sites can regularly exceed legal exposure limits due to machinery, tools, and vehicle operations. Noise levels often range from 80 to 120 decibels, depending on the equipment and activities taking place. Regular noise assessments will be conducted to ensure compliance with safety standards, and employees will be required to use hearing protection when operating or working near noisy equipment.

# Shops and Retail Spaces

Retail environments typically experience moderate noise levels, usually between 50 to 80 decibels, depending on the size of the store, background music, and customer activity. The primary source of excessive noise is often loudspeaker announcements or music systems. Noise levels will be monitored periodically to ensure they remain within safe limits, and adjustments will be made if necessary to protect staff and customers.

# Healthcare Facilities

Healthcare settings, such as hospitals and clinics, generally maintain noise levels around 50 to 70 decibels during normal operations. However, certain areas, such as emergency rooms or diagnostic labs, may experience higher noise levels due to equipment and alarms. Noise monitoring will focus on ensuring that these levels do not disrupt patient care or cause stress to staff. Special attention will be given to managing alarm fatigue by adjusting volumes and response protocols where possible.

# Healthcare Facilities

Noise levels in transport and logistics hubs, such as warehouses, ports, or airports, can range from 70 to 110 decibels due to heavy vehicle movement, machinery, and equipment like forklifts and conveyor belts. Periodic assessments will ensure noise exposure levels are measured and controlled. Employees will be provided with suitable hearing protection and rotated in high-noise areas to limit prolonged exposure.

# Healthcare Facilities

Entertainment venues, such as concert halls, cinemas, and sports arenas, frequently experience noise levels well above 85 decibels, especially during live performances or events. Monitoring systems will be in place to track noise exposure, and hearing protection will be made available to staff working in high-noise zones. Breaks and rotations will be implemented to minimize prolonged exposure, and noise levels will be managed where possible to comply with safety standards.

# Use of Personal Headphones

If employees are allowed to use **personal headphones** and listen to music whilst they are working if this helps them to concentrate. Sound levels should be comfortable, enable you to hear fire alarms and not interfere with your work. The sound from your headphones must not be audible to colleagues, as this can cause a distraction to others.

Prolonged exposure to loud music through headphones can cause harm to hearing. Headphones on sale in Europe are restricted to a maximum output of 100 decibels when used with a mobile handset. At this level the maximum exposure is only between 15 and 30 minutes in any 24 hour period, and so it is unsafe to listen at maximum volume. You must therefore be mindful to keep the volume at a safe level.

Care should also be taken if you wear headphones whilst travelling for work. The volume should be set at a level which enables you to maintain situational awareness, for example being aware of traffic and factors which may affect your personal safety.

# Health Surveillance and Hearing Checks

The organisation will implement a systematic health surveillance program for employees exposed to significant noise risks in line with the occupational risk assessment.

Initial baseline hearing tests will be provided for new employees exposed to noise, followed by periodic monitoring at appropriate intervals.

Employees exposed to noise levels above 85 dB(A) or who report hearing issues will be provided with audiometric testing. Records of hearing checks will be maintained confidentially and securely for a minimum of 40 years, in accordance with legal requirements.

Employees showing signs of hearing deterioration or other noise-related health issues will be referred for further evaluation and provided with appropriate support. Adjustments to work activities or environments will be made where possible to reduce exposure.

Employees will receive regular training on the importance of hearing protection, correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and recognising early symptoms of hearing loss.

Responsibility

is responsible for the implementation of this policy. Signed

Date

Date of Review (recommended 3 years)

**This document is for your guidance only. Professional advice should be sought before use.**