

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK
REGULATION, COMPLIANCE & BEST PRACTICE
FACT SHEET



FACT SHEET 5

Changes to Noise at Work Limits

On 6th April 2006 changes were announced by the HSE in respect of exposure to noise limits which have to be reduced.

The new regulations are welcome by the health and safety minister Lord Hunt of Kings Hunt, who stated "With over one million employees in Great Britain exposed to levels of noise at work which could damage hearing the new regulations will reduce exposure without placing unnecessary burdens on employers.

It is expected that full compliance with the new regulation will eliminate all new cases of hearing damage at work by 2030. With the emphasis on measures to eliminate or reduce risks from noise at work rather than relying on hearing protection.

Employees newly covered by the Regulations are at relatively lower risk, and the employer will need to put in place proportionate noise reduction measures and provide hearing protection on request.

Measures should already be in place for workplaces that fall within the scope of the 1989 Regulations, the main effect will likely be the need to review their risk assessments and prioritise their noise-control measures.

One of the main changes in the Regulation is to lower the exposure levels. From 6th April the level will be lowered by 5dB to 80dB for lower exposure and 85dB for Upper exposure.

Employers should always be looking to eliminate or reduce risks from noise, and the exposure action values are points at which the employers must take specific action. At the lower exposure action value a risk assessment is needed, employees told about the risks and hearing protection must be made available on request; and at the upper exposure action value noise control should be part of a planned programme, hearing checks are needed and hearing protection must be used.

Exposure is assessed over a working day or a week if exposure varies markedly from day to day. Exposure to members of the public from their non-work activities is not covered by the Regulations. Also low-level noise, which, while it may be a nuisance, presents no risk to hearing damage, is not covered by the Regulations.

**For further information about the Regulations, visit
www.hse.gov.uk/noise.**