

1. Introduction

This policy deals with how the Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) addresses the risk to employees from the exposure to noise at work as a result of operating machinery, working near machinery or working in loud environments as a significant part of their job.

The Noise Regulations are designed to protect against risks to both health and safety from exposure to noise – the health risk of hearing damage in those exposed, and safety risks such as the noise affecting the ability to hear instructions or warnings.

2. Legal Duties – Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require employers to control the health risks to their employees from exposure to noise and to others who may be affected by the work of the Council.

Where a hearing protection zone exist those charge of premises you should make sure that visiting workers, including contractors, know in which areas they should use hearing protection and know how to obtain it.

Regulation 4 – Exposure limits

Defines the permitted exposure levels for noise -

- 1) *The lower exposure action values are –*
 - (a) a daily or weekly **personal noise exposure of 80 dB** (A-weighted); and
 - (b) a peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C-weighted).

- 2) *The upper exposure action values are –*
 - (a) a daily or weekly **personal noise exposure of 85 dB** (A-weighted); and
 - (b) a peak sound pressure of 137 dB (C-weighted).

- 3) *The exposure limit values are –*
 - (a) a daily or weekly **personal noise exposure of 87 dB** (A-weighted); and
 - (b) a peak sound pressure of 140 dB (C-weighted).

Regulation 5 – Risk Assessment

Requires DBC to assess the risk to health and safety from noise in the workplace, employees exposed to noise above the lower action level must have their noise exposure assessed.

Regulation 6 – Elimination

Regulation 6 requires the elimination, or control of exposure to noise. Elimination is near impossible given the nature of the tasks undertaken by some of DBC's services especially in the vehicle workshop, waste transfer station, waste collection, grounds maintenance and grave digging.

DBC's equipment purchasing policy will consider where practicable equipment with lower noise levels to combat the noise at source. Where possible engineering solutions will be implemented e.g. screening or enclosing a noise source.

Given the tasks undertaken by staff particular in the VRS, CSG, Waste transfer station and Cemeteries then personal hearing protection (in partnership with other noise reduction control measures) may remain the practical solution for protecting staff from occupational noise exposure.

Regulation 7 - Hearing Protection

Where the daily or weekly **personal noise exposure of 80 dB** is likely then DBC will provide hearing protection. The single number rating (SNR) will be identified by the risk assessment.

Where ear protection is provided employees **must** wear the protection.

Where a hearing protection zone has been declared access to this area will be restricted. The hearing protection zone must be identified by signage and hearing protection provided to staff and visitors entering the hearing protection zone.

Regulation 9 - Health Surveillance

If the risk assessment indicates that there is a risk to the health employees who are, or are likely to be, exposed to noise (normally above 80 dBA A(8)) DBC will ensure employees are placed under suitable health surveillance, which shall include testing of their hearing.

Regulation 10 - Information, instruction and training

In service areas where staff are exposed to noise levels shall be provided with information, instruction and training which covers:

- (a) the nature of risks from exposure to noise;*
- (b) the exposure limit values and upper and lower exposure action values set out in regulation 4;*
- (c) the significant findings of the risk assessment, including any measurements taken, with an explanation of those findings;*
- (d) the availability and provision of personal hearing protectors under regulation 7 and their correct use in accordance with regulation 8(2);*
- (e) why and how to detect and report signs of hearing damage;*
- (f) the entitlement to health surveillance under regulation 9 and its purposes;*
- (g) safe working practices to minimise exposure to noise;*

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to assist DBC comply with the legislation and protect the health of employees. The control measures within the risk assessment, hearing protection zones, purchasing decisions, task rotation all combine to reduce the level of noise exposure.

4. Scope

This policy applies to DBC staff, including agency, temporary workers, work experience, volunteers and those that may be employed via a Government Scheme that are likely to be exposed to noise at work.

5. How DBC Controls of the risk of noise exposure

Risk assessment

Each service area **must** complete a Noise at Work risk assessment based on the generic noise risk assessment for operating hand held power tools (**Appendix I**). Excessive noise from equipment/machinery can be identified by the operator. Well maintained equipment will be quieter and have lower vibration levels.

The noise risk assessment is in addition to the risk assessments for the use of a particular piece of fixed or mobile machinery.

The noise risk assessment may cross reference:

- training in the use of equipment
- Maintenance and servicing of equipment
- Use of equipment, and any
- Pre-user checks of equipment

These may be controls within other risk assessments such Hand Arm Vibration, Whole Body Vibration or task specific risk assessments e.g. use of brush cutters.

The Group Manager for the service is responsible for ensuring that staff attend any hearing tests and training as part of ongoing compliance with this policy.

Staff **must** attend Noise at Work Awareness Training and any Occupational Health appointments.

Staff **must** be trained and deemed competent in the use of equipment/machinery; this must be recorded as part of their probationary and on-going training records.

Staff **must** complete any records as part of the risk assessment and detail any faults, and bring the faults to the attention of their supervisor/line manager. Failure to comply with this policy and associated procedures and risk assessment should be treated as a conduct issue.

Health Surveillance

Health surveillance for noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) usually means regular hearing checks (audiometric testing) to measure the sensitivity of hearing over a range

of sound frequencies. It should include informing employees about the state of their hearing and the keeping of records.

An initial hearing health screening should be conducted for all staff exposed to noise at or above the lower exposure action value of 80dB. Further screening will be directed upon the advice of the Occupational Health provider or employee's doctor for exposed to noise between the lower and upper action values.

After the initial round of hearing health surveillance, DBC will provide annual health surveillance to employees that are frequently exposed to noise above the upper exposure action values (85dB). From the noise survey conducted this will be mostly be (but not limited to) CSG staff, those in the waste transfer station and VRS.

Where exposure is between the lower and upper exposure action values (e.g Old Town Hall staff, Management of Waste/CSG/VRS), or where employees are only occasionally exposed above the upper exposure action values, health surveillance will only be required if information comes to light that an individual may be particularly sensitive to NIHL or as a result of the initial screening.

Pre-Employment

Where the job role has identified that there will be exposure to noise (such as CSG, or cemeteries) are **required** to complete an electronic health screening questionnaire prior to starting employment. This process is managed by Human Resources. This to ensure that they are suitable for the role, that role does not exacerbate an existing condition and whether any reasonable adjustments need/or can be made.

Purchase and Replacement of machinery

No equipment should be purchased unless information relating to noise exposure to the operator is provided. Only equipment that is CE marked will be purchased.

Appendix I

Generic Noise risk assessment for use of hand held power tools

Appendix II: Additional Sources of information

Noise doesn't lose your hearing!

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg363.pdf>

Noise at work: A brief guide to controlling the risks

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf>

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