

Checklist

Noise at work

This is an extract from a London Hazards Centre factsheet on noise at work.

Union representatives should develop an action programme aiming for substitution and control of noisy machines and processes:

- ✓ replace the machine or process by a quieter one
- ✓ reduce the noise by fitting silencers, dampening vibration, improving lubrication, minimising metal to metal contact
- ✓ maintain bearings, gears, lubrication
- ✓ block the noise path or insulate the machine or building
- ✓ move the machine or process away from people or vice versa
- ✓ limit the length of exposure
- ✓ reduce the number of people exposed
- ✓ ensure new machinery is properly designed to reduce noise – set a limit of 75 dB(A) for new machines

Ear protectors should only be used as a temporary measure until noise is removed, reduced or isolated, because:

- ✓ they interfere with communication and isolate the wearer
- ✓ they place the onus for safety on the worker rather than the employer

- ✓ they can lead to complacency about the noise problem
- ✓ they can easily be damaged or deteriorate
- ✓ expertise is needed in their correct choice, use and maintenance

Union representatives should demand that management:

- ✓ surveys all suspect areas
- ✓ provides the results to the union
- ✓ carries out surveys in typical conditions, with all noisy processes in operation and with as few people present as possible as the human body is a great noise absorber

It is not hard to do a simple noise survey if you need to demonstrate the hazard. You can use a hand-held noise survey meter, preferably an integrating type which can show average levels, or a personal dosimeter. Depending on the situation, you may want to survey:

- ✓ daily personal exposure (intensity and duration)
- ✓ average noise intensity
- ✓ peak intensity

Instruments must be checked for correct measurement every time they are used, and they should come with a simple calibrator which does this. They must meet British Standards 6402 (dosimeters), 5969 (peak levels), 6698 (integrating) or 5969 (simple sound level).

The full London Hazards factsheet can be found at www.lhc.org.uk/members/pubs/factsht/79fact.htm

Checklist

Action on vibration – risk assessment

This is based upon Regulation 5 of the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005.

Safety representatives can check whether their employer is complying with Regulation 5 of the new Regulations by asking the following:

In conducting the risk assessment, has the employer assessed daily exposure to vibration by means of:

- ✓ observation of specific working practices?

- ✓ reference to relevant information on the probable magnitude of the vibration corresponding to the equipment used in the particular working conditions?

- ✓ if necessary, measurement of the magnitude of vibration to which their employees are liable to be exposed?

Has the employer assessed whether any employees are likely to be exposed to vibration at or above an exposure action value or above an exposure limit value?

Has the risk assessment included consideration of:

- ✓ the magnitude, type and duration of exposure, including any exposure to intermittent vibration or repeated shocks?

- ✓ the effects of exposure to vibration on employees whose health is at particular risk from such exposure?

- ✓ any effects of vibration on the workplace and work equipment, including the proper handling of controls, the reading of indicators, the stability of structures and the security of joints?

- ✓ any information provided by the manufacturers of work equipment?

- ✓ the availability of replacement equipment designed to reduce exposure to vibration?

- ✓ any extension of exposure at the workplace to whole-body vibration beyond normal working hours, including exposure in rest facilities supervised by the employer?

- ✓ specific working conditions such as low temperatures?

- ✓ appropriate information obtained from health surveillance including, where possible, published information?

Is the risk assessment reviewed regularly and forthwith if:

- ✓ there is reason to suspect that the risk assessment is no longer valid?

- ✓ there has been a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates?

Has the employer recorded:

- ✓ the significant findings of the risk assessment as soon as is practicable after the risk assessment is made or changed?

- ✓ the measures taken to meet the requirements of Regulations 6 and 8 (see above)?