

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY



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DRAFT 2 – 19/11/09

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REVISION TABLE

Issue Number	Date issued	Revision / change
1		Full policy preparation (21.10.09)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 employers are required to provide a safe working environment. In addition, with regard to the levels of noise that may be present in the workplace, the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, impose more specific duties on the employer. Under these regulations, Cheshire East Council, in its capacity as an employer is required to:

- Assess the risks to employees from noise at work which is liable to expose any employee to noise at or above a lower exposure action value.
- Take action to reduce the noise exposure that produces those risks by either eliminating the noise at source or, if this is not reasonably practicable, reducing it to as low a level as is reasonably practicable. If any employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value, the exposure **must** be reduced to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure the legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded. The Regulations define two exposure action values, these being:
 - The lower exposure action values – a daily or weekly exposure of 80 dB (A weighted)*, or a peak sound pressure of 135 dB (C weighted)*, and
 - The upper exposure action values – a daily or weekly exposure of 85 dB (A weighted), or a peak sound pressure of 137 dB (C weighted)

There are also levels of noise exposure which must not be exceeded, these being:

- Exposure limit values – A daily or weekly exposure of 87dB (A weighted), or a peak sound pressure of 140dB (C weighted)

These exposure limit values take account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection.

- Provide employees with personal hearing protection where, in the course of their duties, they are likely to be exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action level and the level of noise cannot be reduced efficiently by other means.
- Ensure that any area of the workplace where there is likely to be exposure to noise at or above an upper action level:
 - Is designated a hearing protection zone
 - Is demarcated and identified by means of the sign specified for the purpose indicating that ear protection must be worn, and
 - Has access to it restricted and no employees are allowed to enter that area unless wearing personal hearing protectors

**Noise is measured in decibels (dB). An 'A-weighting' sometimes written as 'dB(A)', is used to measure average noise levels, and a 'C-weighting' or 'dB(C)', to measure peak, impact or explosive noises.*

- Provide health surveillance where necessary.
- Provide employees with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training if they are likely to be exposed to noise levels at or above a lower exposure action value.

1.2 The Regulations do not apply to:

- Members of the public exposed to noise from their non-work activities, or making an informed choice to go to noisy places;
- Low-level noise which is a nuisance but causes no risk of hearing damage

2. GENERAL STATEMENT

- 2.1 Cheshire East Council (the Council) is committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the risk of hearing damage to employees who work with noisy equipment or in a noisy environment is reduced to a minimum. The Council also recognises that noise levels below those which cause hearing damage, in offices for example, can still cause problems such as disturbance, interference with communication and stress and will take all reasonable steps to reduce noise levels as far as possible.
- 2.2 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for managers and to assist them meeting their responsibilities as required by the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.

3. THE EFFECTS OF NOISE AT WORK

- 3.1 Noise at work can cause hearing loss which can be temporary or permanent. People often experience temporary deafness after leaving a noisy place but their hearing recovers within a few hours. Permanent hearing can be caused immediately by sudden, extremely loud, explosive noises such as can be caused by guns or cartridge operated machines. Usually, however, hearing loss is gradual due to prolonged exposure to noise. It may only be when the damage caused by noise over the years combines with hearing loss due to ageing that people realise how deaf they have become. Exposure to noise can also cause tinnitus, which is a sensation of noises in the ears such as ringing or buzzing. Tinnitus may occur in combination with hearing loss.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 It is the responsibility of each Service Manager to:

- Identify any work activities involving equipment which is potentially noisy and any working environments which are potentially noisy that exist in the areas under their control.
- Arrange for noise measurements to be carried out where a need to do so has been identified. The Corporate Health & Safety Team can undertake individual noise exposure measurements for employees on the request of managers or can recommend suitable external organisations to carry out workplace environmental noise assessments this task.
- Ensure that noise risk assessments are undertaken for all work activities in noisy areas or using noisy equipment, where the noise is liable to expose any employees to noise at or above a lower exposure action level. Any actions identified in the noise assessment as being required to reduce risk must be completed and the findings of these risk assessments must be communicated to the employees who may be affected by them. Service Managers can delegate this task to employees within their team if the employee is competent but it must be remembered that the Service Manager remains responsible for the risk assessment.
- Inform Human Resources of any new employees who will be regularly exposed to noise levels of 85dB(A) or higher so that they can be assessed as part of their pre employment medical before starting in their new role.
- Arrange appointments for employees with the Occupational Health Service provider any necessary.
- Refer any employee who reports signs of noise induced hearing loss to the Occupational Health Unit and to notify the Corporate Health & Safety Team of the referral.

4.2 It is the responsibility of the **Supervisors and Managers** to ensure that employees comply with the findings of the noise assessment and undertake tasks in a safe manner including wearing any necessary PPE and where appropriate in accordance with any method statements / safe systems of work which apply to the activity.

4.3 It is the responsibility of the **Human Resources Service** to maintain appropriate records of any testing carried out in the employee's personal file.

4.4 It is the responsibility of the **Corporate Health & Safety Team** to report any medically confirmed diagnosis of noise induced hearing loss to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995.

4.5 It is the responsibility of **Employees** to comply with and use the measures provided under the Control Of Noise At Work Regulations 2005, including:

- (a) Using any noise-control measures provided, such as exhaust silencers and machine enclosures, in accordance with instructions;
- (b) Wearing hearing protection in accordance with instructions provided when exposed at or above a lower exposure action value (80 dB(A) or 135 dB(C) and at all times in areas marked as hearing protection zones;
- (c) Taking care of any hearing protectors and noise-control equipment that they need to use;
- (d) Following any working practices that are put into place
- (e) Reporting, in accordance with procedures, any defect found in the hearing protectors or other protective measures provided or any difficulties in using them.

In addition, under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, employees are required generally to co-operate with their employer to enable the employer to carry out legal duties.

5. NOISE MEASUREMENTS AND RISK ASSESSMENTS

- 5.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Team can arrange for individual noise exposure measurements for employees who work in of noisy areas, or with noisy processes and equipment, which have been identified by audits or risk assessments, at the request of managers or following an Occupational Health Referral. Individual noise exposure measurements will also be undertaken where an employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above the lower exposure action values – see Appendix 1 (NB: a person's daily noise exposure depends on both the level of noise that they are exposed to and the length of the exposure).
- 5.2 These measurements will be used by Service Managers as the basis for formulating noise risk assessments and for deciding on any action plans required for the implementation of any necessary remedial measures. Exposure measurements will be recorded and updated regularly, particularly when there are changes in work practice which result in changes to the noise exposure levels of employees. Guidance on what action needs to be taken is outlined in Appendix 2.
- 5.3 Noise risk assessments can be incorporated into the general task risk assessment for a work activity see example at appendix 3 or written as a specific risk assessment just for noise.

- 5.4 A specific noise risk assessment may be required where young persons (**define**) or less able personnel are involved in the task and must take into consideration their individual needs.
- 5.5 To get a rough estimate of whether a noise risk assessment is required managers could use the simple tests outlined in Table 1 below. Working in an environment of 80 dB for six hours will result in exposure at the lower exposure action value.

Table 1

Test	Probable noise level	A risk assessment will be needed if the noise is like this for more than:
The noise is intrusive but normal conversation is possible	80 dB	6 hours
You have to shout to talk to someone 2 m away	85 dB	2 hours
You have to shout to talk to someone 1 m away	90 dB	45 minutes

L108 Controlling Noise At Work – HSE Guidance On The Control Of Noise At Work Regulations

6. REDUCTION OF NOISE EXPOSURE LEVELS

- 6.1 If any employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above a lower exposure action value, then the Service Manager must carry out a specific noise risk assessment. The noise risk assessment must identify any measures which need to be taken in order to meet the requirements of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations. At this level the employer also has a duty to provide hearing protection to those employees who request it and to inform, instruct and train on the risks posed by exposure to noise and the control measures to be used.
- 6.2 If any employee is likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value, the Council shall reduce the exposure to as low a level as is reasonably practicable by establishing and implementing a programme of appropriate organisational and technical measures, other than the provision of personal hearing protectors.
- 6.3 The Council shall ensure that any area of the workplace where employees are likely to be exposed to noise at or above an upper exposure action value is designated a Hearing Protection Zone. Access to such a zone will be restricted, all employees who enter the area being required to wear the appropriate hearing protection.
- 6.4 The Council will designate and mark out Hearing Protection Zones as necessary, which may include particular areas, operations or pieces of equipment. Signs used will comply with the Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 (see Figure 1 below). All personnel entering these zones will be required to wear ear protectors.



Figure 1 examples of hearing protection zone signs

7. HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

- 7.1 Health surveillance is a programme of systematic health checks to identify early signs and symptoms of work-related ill health and to allow action to be taken to prevent its progression. It is also useful in monitoring the effectiveness of controls, though it is not in itself a control measure or a substitute for controlling risk at source.
- 7.2 In the case of noise, all employees who are regularly exposed to noise levels of 85dB(A) or higher must be subject to health surveillance, including audiometric testing. All such employees of the Council will be asked to attend an audiometric test with the Occupational Health Unit once a year. Any new employees who will be regularly exposed to noise levels of 85dB(A) or higher will also be assessed as part of their pre employment medical before starting in their new role. Where exposure is between 80dB and 85dB, or where employees are only occasionally exposed above the upper exposure action levels, health surveillance will only be required if information comes to light that an individual may be particularly sensitive to noise induced hearing loss.
- 7.3 If at any time between the routine checks, a member of staff notices any of the signs of hearing loss or tinnitus, they should report it to their Line Manager or Supervisor in order that referral to the Occupational Health unit can be organised and investigation of the equipment / work environment can be carried out.

8. PURCHASING OF NEW EQUIPMENT

- 8.1 Whenever new equipment is to be purchased, the supplier's noise emissions information should be checked in advance. Every reasonable effort should be made by the manager purchasing the equipment to ensure that equipment with the lowest noise levels, and best protection is obtained. Any second-hand equipment should also be assessed before being put into use.

9. MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT

- 9.1 In order to minimise the deterioration of equipment which may result in increased noise, equipment should be inspected and serviced on a regular basis. As well as the machinery itself, any acoustic enclosures that have been installed as a noise reduction measure should also be regularly checked and maintained. Advice from the suppliers/manufacturers should be taken into account. Service Managers must ensure that records are kept of all maintenance/servicing of equipment.
- 9.2 Individual users must be made aware that if at any point they feel a machine is emitting increased level of noise, they must report it at the earliest opportunity so that further investigations can be made.

10. TRAINING

- 10.1 The Council will provide training to all relevant employees on noise at work. All employees who may be subject to high levels of noise must be made aware of the risks to which they may be exposed and the control measures to be used to avoid and/or control those risks. Where they are exposed above the lower exposure action values, they should be informed of :
- The likely noise exposure and the risk to hearing this noise creates
 - The measures that the employer has put in place to control risks and exposures
 - How to obtain hearing protection
 - How to report defects in hearing protection and noise control equipment
 - What their duties are under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
 - How they can minimize any risks to their hearing by using the hearing protection provided properly, knowing when to use it, looking after it and storing it correctly
 - The systems in place for health surveillance.
- 10.2 Once a noise assessment has been completed and controls identified the noise assessment must be communicated to the employees to whom it is applicable. This can be done as a “toolbox talk” or via formal training sessions. It is not sufficient to just hand out copies of the noise assessment.

11. MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTORS

The music and entertainment sectors are now covered by the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and are defined in the regulations as all workplaces where:

- Live music is played
- Recorded music is played in a restaurant, bar, public house, discotheque or nightclub or alongside live music or a live dramatic or dance performance.

12. REFERENCES

12.1 In compiling this policy, the following documents have been referred to:

- HSE Guidance On The Control Of Noise At Work Regulations - L108 Controlling Noise At Work
- HSE IND(G) 362(rev1) noise at work – guidance for employers on the control of noise at work regulations 2005
- HSE (HSG) 260 Sound Advice – Control of noise at work in Music and entertainment.

13. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

13.1 This policy document shall be monitored, and reviewed biennially to evaluate its effectiveness. The document shall be revised as necessary, and in light of such evaluation.

APPENDIX 1 – EXPOSURE ACTION VALUES

From: HSE Guidance on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations - L108 Controlling Noise at Work

- (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).

Noise is measured in decibels (dB). An 'A-weighting' sometimes written as 'dB(A)', is used to measure average noise levels, and a 'C-weighting' or 'dB(C)', to measure peak, impact or explosive noises.

Some examples of typical noise levels are shown below. This shows that a quiet office may range from 40-50 dB, while a road drill can produce 100-110 dB.

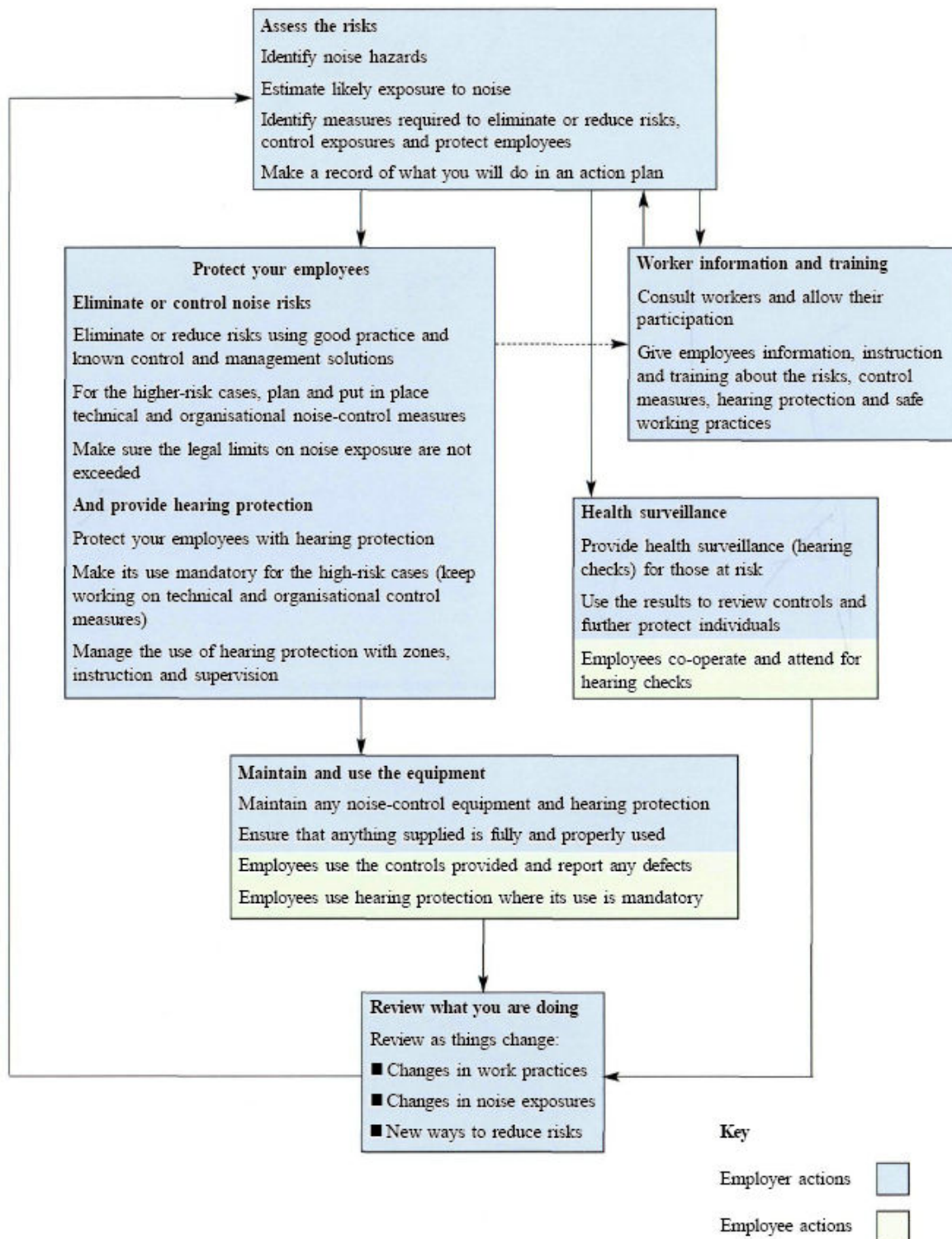
From IND(G)362 (rev1) noise at work – guidance for employers on the control of noise at work regulations 2005



APPENDIX 2 – RISK MANAGEMENT FLOW CHART

From HSE Guidance on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations - L108 Controlling Noise At Work

Managing noise risks



APPENDIX 3 – SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT



Directorate:	Section:	Date of assessment:
Places	Waste and Recycling	01/11/09
Carried out by:	Job title:	Review date:
AN Other	Waste manager	1/11/10
Risk Assessment for:	Emptying of Glass and Cans at depot	

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No.	Task	Potential Hazard	Groups of People at Risk	Existing Control Measures	Risk Priority	Additional Controls Required to Minimise Risk
1	Emptying glass and cans from vehicles at the recycling yard	Noise	Waste operatives Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycling Yard Operative (RYO) have been issued with ear defenders RYO will stop operation if unauthorised person approaches / is seen Site rules on gate indicating no unauthorised entry 	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake individual noise assessments for recycling yard operatives to ensure PPE is adequate. Refer RYO to OHU for annual hearing screening
		Sharps / Flying glass		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Fork Lift Truck is fully enclosed with Perspex 1 Fork Lift Truck is partially enclosed RYO issued with eye protection RYO wear standard issue trousers. Recycling yard operative will stop operation if unauthorised person approaches / is seen indicating no unauthorised entry Yard is permanently manned Contractors by appointment only 		

APPENDIX 5

RISK PRIORITY HIGH ,MED OR LOW	HIGH; accident likely with possibility of causing serious injury or loss MEDIUM: possibility of accident causing minor injury or loss LOW; accident unlikely with control measures in place
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Directorate:	Section:	Date of assessment:
Places	Waste and Recycling	01/11/09
Carried out by:	Job title:	Review date:
AN Other	Waste manager	1/11/10
Risk Assessment for:	Emptying of Glass and Cans at depot	

RISK ASSESSMENT CONTINUED – FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

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No.	Potential Hazard	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Target Completion Date	Action Completed (Signed & Dated)
1	Noise	Undertake individual noise assessments for recycling yard operatives to ensure PPE is adequate.	CH&S	01/12/09	
2	Noise	Refer RYO to OHU for annual hearing screening	AN Other	01/12/09	

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