



LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Noise Regulations

In the UK an estimated 17,000 people suffer deafness, tinnitus or other ear conditions as a result of exposure to excessive noise at work.*

The current Noise at Work Regulations 1989 require that:-

- where employees are exposed to sound levels **at or above 90dB(A), (the second action level)**, the employer must provide and strictly enforce the use of suitable hearing protection in the affected areas of workplace.
In addition, audiometric testing should be initiated at this level to check and monitor any signs of hearing damage. If hearing damage is discovered the matter must be referred to a medical doctor for further investigation.
- where employees are exposed to sound levels **at or above 85dB(A), (the first action level)**, the employer must make suitable hearing protection available to employees on request, but cannot enforce its use.

Typical Noise Intensity Levels*

Noise Conversation	50-60 dB(A)
Loud Radio	65-75 dB(A)
Busy Street	78-85 dB(A)
Heavy Lorry about 7 metres away	95-100 dB(A)
Pighouse at feeding time	110 dB(A)
Chain saw	115-120 dB(A)
Jet taking off 25 metres away	140 dB(A)

* Source – HSE website

As of February 2006 a new European Directive, 2003/10/EEC will be transposed into national law as the **Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005**. Under the new legislation a new Limit Value of 87dB(A) at the ear (under hearing protective equipment) must not be exceeded, and the Upper Action Level will become 85dB(A) and the Lower Action Level will become 80dB(A).

Whilst a reduction of 5dB(A) may not at first glance appear significant, it is worth noting that a reduction of just 3dB(A) is roughly equated to halving the sound energy level. This regulatory change is likely to result in a dramatic increase in the numbers of workers requiring hearing protection. Many employees who don't need hearing protection under current law may well qualify once the Directive becomes national law.

To help organizations find the most suitable hearing protection for their workplace more quickly, 3M has developed the quick-step [3M Hearing Protection Selector](#). Results are displayed for each 3M hearing protector and colour codes help compare results with selection guidelines and optimum attenuations.

Typical Construction Activities likely to involve Noise Levels above 80dB(A)

Blasting	100 dB(A)
Carpentry	86-96 dB(A)
Concrete Pouring	93dB(A)
Driving - dumpers, tractors, loaders	95-100 dB(A)
Digging/Scabbling	100 dB(A)
Shuttering	91 dB(A)

*Source – HSE Publication “Noise in Construction”

Current Regulations	dB(A) Level	As from Feb 2006
Upper Action Level – at this point or above, employers must strictly enforce the use of hearing protection	90	
Lower Action Level – at this point or above, employers are obligated to make suitable hearing protection available on request	85	Upper Action Level – at this point or above, employers must strictly enforce the use of hearing protection
	80	Lower Action Level – at this point or above, employers are obligated to make suitable hearing protection available on request
		+ an Exposure Limit Value of 87dB(A) at the ear under HPE which must not be exceeded

3M Safety Solutions

3M United Kingdom

3M Centre
Cain Road, Bracknell
Berkshire RG12 8HT
Tel: 0870 60 800 60
www.3M.co.uk/ohes

3M Ireland Limited

The Iveagh Building
The Park, Carrickmines
Dublin 18
Tel: 1 800 320 500

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