



NOISE AT WORK POLICY

Version 2 (DRAFT)

1.0 Introduction

The Noise at Work Regulations 2005 apply to all workplaces and require employers to take appropriate measures to protect their employees from exposure to high levels of noise at work.

2.0 Compliance

- Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

3.0 Policy Arrangements

Where noise is thought to exceed 80dB(A) (i.e. the First Action Level) a noise assessment must be carried out by a competent person.

As a rough guide, a noise assessment will be required if people have to shout or have difficulty being understood by someone about 2 metres away.

When this level of noise is thought to exist the Health & Safety Team should be contacted in order to arrange for a noise assessment to be carried out by a competent person.

A competent person is someone who has the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to be able to:

- Understand the purpose of noise assessments
- Understand what information needs to be obtained
- Appreciate their limitations and know when to seek further advice
- Make noise measurements using the appropriate equipment
- Explain their findings and make recommendations.

4.0 Noise Assessments

Records of all noise assessments that are undertaken must be kept. The assessments should be reviewed whenever there are significant changes in the equipment or the work to which they relate, or if there is any reason to suspect they are no longer valid. For example, an introduction of an additional item of machinery into a workplace may have an effect on the noise level in that area.

4.1 Control Measures

If a noise assessment reveals that the noise level reaches the First Action Level of **80 dB(A)**, Management must ensure that employees are:

- Provided with adequate information, instruction and training about the risks to their hearing
- Advised of ways to minimise risk
- Provided with ear protection on request.

If the noise level reaches the Second Action Level of **85** dB(A), the noise must be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable by means other than ear protection, for example:

- Isolation of noisy equipment
- Providing soundproof havens for employees
- Reducing exposure time.

Where it is not practicable to reduce the noise level to below **85** dB(A), Management must ensure that:

- These areas are demarcated as “Ear Protection Zones”
- Adequate signage is displayed in these areas reading Ear Protection Zone – Ear Protection Must Be Worn
- Suitable hearing protection is provided and worn at all times by all employees when in Ear Protection Zones
- Employees have been shown how to use their ear protectors properly.

Ear protectors and any other items of protective equipment must be maintained in good condition. Employees have a duty to report any defects that are found and report to their Manager.

Items of work equipment and machinery should be maintained in good condition in order to minimise the noise levels generated. For example if the machine panels are vibrating then isolate the panels or add noise damping to them.

Noise Controls

High levels of noise in the workplace can cause irreversible damage to your hearing that can lead to deafness. Although FDC will endeavour to reduce the level of noise to the lowest level practicable without the use of hearing protection, this is not always possible. Therefore there may be cases when ear protectors will be required in order to protect you from the risk of hearing damage.

Hearing Protection

When is hearing protection likely to be required?

If the noise level in your workplace is above **80** decibels you will be provided with information about the risks to your hearing. You will also be provided with ear protection on request.

If the noise level in an area of your workplace is **85** decibels or above, that area will be classed as an Ear Protection Zone. You must always wear ear protection when in an Ear Protection Zone.

If you believe that the area where you work has a high level of noise and ear protection has not been provided, or if you have a ringing in your ears after work, you should inform your Manager.

Types of ear protection

There are two main types of ear protection:

- Earplugs – these are made of a soft flexible material, with high sound attenuation properties, and are pushed into the entrance of the ear canal. Earplugs come in both disposable and reusable types
- Earmuffs – High-attenuation cups which fit over the ears and are held in place by a headband.

Sound Advice

Don't be put off by wearing ear protection, the more you wear them the more normal it will become.

Never remove your protectors where it is noisy, even for a short time, as it doesn't take much noise to damage your hearing.

If you feel uncomfortable wearing your ear protectors ask to try another kind as some people get on better with earplugs than earmuffs and vice versa.

Don't think you can get used to noise. While your hearing can adjust for a short while, it does not take long for it to be damaged forever.

Wear ear protection **AT ALL TIMES** when in an 'Ear Protection Zone'.

4.2 Noise Measurements

Noise is measured using a sound level meter which reads sound pressure levels in dBA logarithmic scale to the base of 10 is used and for every 3dB will result as a doubling in sound intensity. Therefore a sound reading changing from 75dB to 81dB, the sound loudness or intensity has increased by 4 times.

5.0 Symptoms of Hearing Impairment

Exposure to high noise levels can cause a number of adverse effects, including:

- Noise induced hearing loss – irreversible hearing damage that steadily worsens over time.
- Tinnitus – “ringing in the ear” that can be extremely painful and may cause severe torment, especially at night when it can prevent sleep.
- Accidents – due to distracting attention and concentration or masking audible warning signals.
- Reduced efficiency, morale and increased stress due to general nuisance.

In these cases FDC will endeavour to reduce the noise level to the lowest level practicable and will carry out assessments of any area where there is a likelihood of the noise level reaching 85 decibels, {80dB(A)}.

5.1 Exposure Limit Values

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

- daily or weekly exposure of 87 dB;
- peak sound pressure of 140 dB.

5.2 Levels of Hearing Impairment

The four levels of hearing impairment are defined by the quietest sound that you can hear, which are measured in decibels.

Mild deafness

Mild deafness can make speak difficult in noisy situations. The quietest sound that you can hear is between 25 and 39 dB.

Moderate deafness

You may find it difficult to understand speech without a hearing aid. The quietest sound you can hear is between 40dB and 69 dB.

Severe deafness

If you are severely deaf then the quietest sound you can hear is between 70 and 89dB and even with the use of a hearing aid would need to use sign language or lip read to understand conversation.

6.0 Who Might be Affected?

Although the vast majority of FDC staff will not be exposed to excessive noise levels during their working day, there are certain individuals such as leisure centre and maintenance staff that may be exposed to noise levels that have the potential to cause hearing damage.

Employees who work as call handlers within Customer Access are unlikely to be exposed to noise that would exceed the 80db lower exposure action level.

7.0 Events

Employees and event organisers have a responsibility to assess and control noise levels at events to control the risk of hearing damage to ensure the legal limit on noise exposure isn't exceeded.

8.0 Health Surveillance

Initial baseline audiometric testing is provided to employees who are likely to be exposed to noise over long period. Hearing ability can then be monitored to see if it has deteriorated over time.

Health surveillance will be normally reviewed every three years unless the risk assessment or test results deem otherwise. If an employee has any signs or symptoms related to the hazards that they work with, then they must be referred to the occupational health nurse for review.

9.0 Further Information & Guidance

Further information regarding noise at work may be obtained from a member of the Health and Safety Team.

- The Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- HSE – www.hse.gov.uk
- Sound Advice – <http://soundadvice.info>
- Noise Policy Statement for England - <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/noise/npse/>

10.0 Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has been Equality Impact Assessed. The policy aims to meet the diverse needs of the workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others. The Equality Impact Assessment confirms that this policy meets the standards.

10.1 Equality Impact Assessment Tool

To be completed and attached to any procedural document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

	Insert Name of Policy / Procedure		
	Noise	Yes / No	Comments
1.	Does the policy / guidance affect one group less or more favorably than another on the basis of:		Can make reasonable adjustments if necessary.
	• Disability – learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems	No	
	• Gender reassignment	No	
	• Pregnancy / maternity	No	
	• Race	No	
	• Religion or belief	No	
	• Age	No	
	• Sex	No	
	• Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	No	
	• Marriage / civil partnerships	No	
2.	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3.	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	No	
4.	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	
5.	If so can the impact be avoided?	No	
6.	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	N/A	
7.	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	N/A	