
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1989 No. 1790

The Noise at Work Regulations 1989

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Noise at Work Regulations 1989 and shall come into force on 1st January 1990.

Interpretation

2.—(1) In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires—

“daily personal noise exposure” means the level of daily personal noise exposure of an employee ascertained in accordance with Part I of the Schedule to these Regulations, but taking no account of the effect of any personal ear protector used;

“exposed” means exposed whilst at work, and “exposure” shall be construed accordingly;

“the first action level” means a daily personal noise exposure of 85 dB(A);

“the peak action level” means a level of peak sound pressure of 200 pascals;

“the second action level” means a daily personal noise exposure of 90 dB(A).

(2) In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires, any reference to—

(a) an employer includes a reference to a self-employed person and any duty imposed by these Regulations on an employer in respect of his employees shall extend to a self-employed person in respect of himself;

(b) an employee includes a reference to a self-employed person;

and where any duty is placed by these Regulations on an employer in respect of his employees, that employer shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, be under a like duty in respect of any other person at work who may be affected by the work carried on by him.

(3) Duties under these Regulations imposed upon an employer shall also be imposed upon the manager of a mine or a quarry (within in either case the meaning of section 180 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954(1)) in so far as those duties relate to the mine or quarry or part of the quarry of which he is the manager and to matters under his control.

(4) Unless the context otherwise requires, any reference in these Regulations to—

(a) a numbered regulation is a reference to the regulation in these Regulations so numbered; and

(b) a numbered paragraph is a reference to the paragraph so numbered in the regulation in which the reference appears.

Disapplication of duties

3. The duties imposed by these Regulations shall not extend to—

(1) 1954 c. 70; section 180 was modified by S.I. 1974/2013, Schedule 2, Part I, paragraph 3.

- (a) the master or crew of a sea-going ship or to the employer of such persons, in relation to the normal ship-board activities of a ship's crew under the direction of the master; or
- (b) the crew of any aircraft or hovercraft which is moving under its own power or any other person on board any such aircraft or hovercraft who is at work in connection with its operation.

Assessment of exposure

4.—(1) Every employer shall, when any of his employees is likely to be exposed to the first action level or above or to the peak action level or above, ensure that a competent person makes a noise assessment which is adequate for the purposes—

- (a) of identifying which of his employees are so exposed; and
- (b) of providing him with such information with regard to the noise to which those employees may be exposed as will facilitate compliance with his duties under regulations 7, 8, 9 and 11.

(2) The noise assessment required by paragraph (1) shall be reviewed when—

- (a) there is reason to suspect that the assessment is no longer valid; or
- (b) there has been a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates;

and, where as a result of the review changes in the assessment are required, those changes shall be made.

Assessment records

5. Following any noise assessment made pursuant to regulation 4(1), the employer shall ensure that an adequate record of that assessment, and of any review thereof carried out pursuant to regulation 4(2), is kept until a further noise assessment is made pursuant to regulation 4(1).

Reduction of risk of hearing damage

6. Every employer shall reduce the risk of damage to the hearing of his employees from exposure to noise to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

Reduction of noise exposure

7. Every employer shall, when any of his employees is likely to be exposed to the second action level or above or to the peak action level or above, reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable (other than by the provision of personal ear protectors), the exposure to noise of that employee.

Ear protection

8.—(1) Every employer shall ensure, so far as is practicable, that when any of his employees is likely to be exposed to the first action level or above in circumstances where the daily personal noise exposure of that employee is likely to be less than 90 dB(A), that employee is provided, at his request, with suitable and efficient personal ear protectors.

(2) Every employer shall ensure, so far as is practicable, that when any of his employees is likely to be exposed to the second action level or above or to the peak action level or above, that employee is provided with suitable personal ear protectors which, when properly worn, can reasonably be expected to keep the risk of damage to that employee's hearing to below that arising from exposure to the second action level or, as the case may be, to the peak action level.

Ear protection zones

9.—(1) Every employer shall, in respect of any premises under his control, ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that—

- (a) each ear protection zone is demarcated and identified by means of the sign specified in paragraph A.3.3 of Appendix A to Part 1 of BS 5378, which sign shall include such text as indicates—
 - (i) that it is an ear protection zone, and
 - (ii) the need for his employees to wear personal ear protectors whilst in any such zone; and
- (b) none of his employees enters any such zone unless that employee is wearing personal ear protectors.

(2) In this regulation, “ear protection zone” means any part of the premises referred to in paragraph (1) where any employee is likely to be exposed to the second action level or above or to the peak action level or above, and “Part 1 of BS 5378” has the same meaning as in regulation 2(1) of the Safety Signs Regulations 1980(2).

Maintenance and use of equipment

10.—(1) Every employer shall—

- (a) ensure, so far as is practicable, that anything provided by him to or for the benefit of an employee in compliance with his duties under these Regulations (other than personal ear protectors provided pursuant to regulation 8(1)) is fully and properly used; and
- (b) ensure, so far as is practicable, that anything provided by him in compliance with his duties under these Regulations is maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair.

(2) Every employee shall, so far as is practicable, fully and properly use personal ear protectors when they are provided by his employer pursuant to regulation 8(2) and any other protective measures provided by his employer in compliance with his duties under these Regulations; and, if the employee discovers any defect therein, he shall report it forthwith to his employer.

Provision of information to employees

11. Every employer shall, in respect of any premises under his control, provide each of his employees who is likely to be exposed to the first action level or above or to the peak action level or above with adequate information, instruction and training on—

- (a) the risk of damage to that employee’s hearing that such exposure may cause;
- (b) what steps that employee can take to minimise that risk;
- (c) the steps that that employee must take in order to obtain the personal ear protectors referred to in regulation 8(1); and
- (d) that employee’s obligations under these Regulations.

Modification of duties of manufacturers etc. of articles for use at work and articles of fairground equipment

12. In the case of articles for use at work or articles of fairground equipment, section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974(3) (which imposes general duties on manufacturers etc. as

(2) S.I. 1980/1471.

(3) 1974 c. 37; section 6 was amended by the Consumer Protection Act 1987 (c. 43), Schedule 3, paragraph 1.

regards articles for use at work, substances and articles of fairground equipment) shall be modified so that any duty imposed on any person by subsection (1) of that section shall include a duty to ensure that, where any such article as is referred to therein is likely to cause any employee to be exposed to the first action level or above or to the peak action level or above, adequate information is provided concerning the noise likely to be generated by that article.

Exemptions

13.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Health and Safety Executive may, by a certificate in writing, exempt any employer from—

- (a) the requirement in regulation 7, where the daily personal noise exposure of the relevant employee, averaged over a week and ascertained in accordance with Part II of the Schedule to these Regulations, is below 90 dB(A) and there are adequate arrangements for ensuring that that average will not be exceeded; or
- (b) the requirement in regulation 8(2), where—
 - (i) the daily personal noise exposure of the relevant employee, averaged over a week and ascertained in accordance with Part II of the Schedule to these Regulations, is below 90 dB(A) and there are adequate arrangements for ensuring that that average will not be exceeded,
 - (ii) the full and proper use of the personal ear protectors referred to in that paragraph would be likely to cause risks to the health or safety of the user, or
 - (iii) (subject to the use of personal ear protectors affording the highest degree of personal protection which it is reasonably practicable to achieve in the circumstances) compliance with that requirement is not reasonably practicable;

and any such exemption may be granted subject to conditions and to a limit of time and may be revoked at any time by a certificate in writing.

(2) The Executive shall not grant any such exemption unless, having regard to the circumstances of the case and in particular to—

- (a) the conditions, if any, which it proposes to attach to the exemption; and
- (b) any other requirements imposed by or under any enactments which apply to the case,

it is satisfied that the health and safety of persons who are likely to be affected by the exemption will not be prejudiced in consequence of it.

Modifications relating to the Ministry of Defence etc.

14.—(1) In this regulation, any reference to—

- (a) “visiting forces” is a reference to visiting forces within the meaning of any provision of Part I of the Visiting Forces Act 1952(4); and
- (b) “headquarters or organisation” is a reference to a headquarters or organisation designated for the purposes of the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations Act 1964(5).

(2) The Secretary of State for Defence may, in the interests of national security, by a certificate in writing exempt—

- (a) Her Majesty’s Forces;
- (b) visiting forces; or
- (c) any member of a visiting force working in or attached to any headquarters or organisation,

(4) 1952 c. 67.

(5) 1964 c. 5.

from any requirement imposed by these Regulations and any such exemption may be granted subject to conditions and to a limit of time and may be revoked at any time by a certificate in writing, except that, before any such exemption is granted, the Secretary of State for Defence must be satisfied that suitable arrangements have been made for the assessment of the health risks created by the work involving exposure to noise and for adequately controlling the exposure to noise of persons to whom the exemption relates.

Revocation

- 15.** Regulation 44 of the Woodworking Machines Regulations 1974⁽⁶⁾ is hereby revoked.

Signed by order of the Secretary of State.

2nd October 1989

Patrick Nicholls
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,
Department of Employment

(6) [S.I. 1974/903](#), to which there are amendments not relevant to these Regulations.