

# Health & Safety Policy

## HSP 24

### Noise

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Key Document details:

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<b>Title:</b>	HSP 24 – Noise
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<b>Application:</b>	This policy applies equally to all The White Horse Federation (TWHF) employees including agency or casual staff, and to all premises where TWHF is either the ‘employer’ or is in control of the premises.

<b>Definitions</b>	For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply;	
	Exposure Action Values	The levels of exposure to noise averaged out over a working day or week or the maximum noise to which an employee is exposed in a working day.
	Exposure Limit Values	The levels of noise exposure that must not be exceeded. These exposure limit values take account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection, i.e. the values are the noise experienced at the ear with hearing protection utilised.
	Decibel (dB)	The unit of measurement for loudness of a sound. The higher the dB, the louder the sound.
	Peak Sound Pressure	This is the maximum sound exposure permitted for any individual and takes hearing protection into account i.e. it is the actual sound exposure of the individual ‘at the ears’ following any attenuation from hearing protection.
<b>Policy Aims</b>	This policy aims to implement measures for the control of noise levels in the workplace to prevent damage to the hearing from noise exposure, by considering the Exposure Action Values and Exposure Limit Values where long term exposure will cause noise induced hearing loss.	
<b>Policy</b>	<p>TWHF will put in place measures to protect employees and others who may be exposed, from the risks of noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus which can be caused by exposure to excessive noise. Also to comply with the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.</p> <p>These measures will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing the risks from noise exposure</li> <li>• Taking measures to reduce noise exposure where a risk assessment shows that this is necessary</li> <li>• Ensuring the level of noise generated is taken into account when a new piece of equipment is purchased or hired</li> <li>• Providing hearing protection where necessary if risks cannot be adequately reduced by other means</li> <li>• Providing information on the risks from noise and the measures in place to reduce these</li> <li>• Providing Occupational Health Referral Surveillance where employees report health issues.</li> </ul> <p>This policy does not cover the environmental aspects of noise and noise pollution or the adverse effects on wellbeing which can arise from ‘nuisance’ noise which is below the levels likely to cause deafness.</p>	

<b>Risk</b>	Noise Induced Hearing Loss
<b>Responsibility</b>	This responsibility is discharged primarily at the line management/operational level.
<b><u>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</u></b>	
I.	<p>Roles and responsibilities are defined in HSP2 Organisation.</p> <p>Any specific actions are detailed in the arrangements section below.</p>
<b><u>Arrangements</u></b>	
I.	<p><b>Regulatory Noise Levels to be Monitored</b></p> <p>Noise levels are generally expressed in decibels (dB). Common noise levels would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50-60 dB - normal conversation</li> <li>• 80 dB - noisy street</li> <li>• 100 dB - pneumatic drill</li> <li>• 125 dB - jet aircraft</li> </ul> <p>An increase of 3dB may be barely noticeable because of the way ears work, but it means a doubling in the noise level. Small changes in numbers can be far more significant than they may seem.</p> <p><b>Noise Exposure Action Values and Limit Values</b></p> <p>The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 requires specific action at certain action values and set maximum values which must not be exceeded.</p> <p>These relate to the levels of exposure averaged over a working day or week and the maximum noise (peak sound pressure) which staff are exposed to in a working day.</p> <p><b>Lower Exposure Action Values</b></p> <p>The Lower Exposure Action Value is reached where a member of staff is exposed to an average daily or weekly noise dose of 80 dB or a peak sound pressure of 135 dB. If these levels are reached, staff members must be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• informed of the level of exposure and the associated risks</li> <li>• instructed in how to minimise the risks and be provided with ear protection.</li> </ul> <p><b>Upper Exposure Action Values</b></p> <p>The Upper Exposure Action Value is reached where a member of staff is exposed to an average daily or weekly noise dose of 85 dB or a peak sound pressure of 137 dB. If these levels are reached,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ear protection must be provided to ensure that the daily noise dose is reduced to below 85 dB, the area must be designated an ear protection zone and staff exposed provided with annual health surveillance.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Exposure Limit Values</b></p> <p>The Regulations also set maximum levels of noise exposure of 87 dB and the peak sound pressure is 140 dB that must not be exceeded. . These exposure limit values take into account any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection.</p>
2.	<p><b>Identifying if there is a noise problem in the workplace</b></p> <p>Identifying whether there is a noise problem in the workplace will depend on how loud the noise is and how long people are exposed to it. As a simple guide, action should be taken if any of the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the noise intrusive, e.g. machinery noise, continuous process noise, vehicle noise for most of the working day?</li> <li>• Do staff working in the area have to raise their voices to carry out a normal conversation when about 2 metres apart for at least part of the day?</li> <li>• Do staff use noisy power tools or machinery for more than half an hour each day?</li> <li>• Are there noises due to impacts such as hammering, pneumatic impact tools etc.?</li> <li>• Are there areas of the workplace where noise levels could interfere with warning or danger signals?</li> </ul> <p>If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes' then a risk assessment should be undertaken.</p>
3.	<p><b>Noise (Risk) Assessment</b></p> <p>Any work process, equipment or workplace, which is identified as exposing staff to excessive noise, will be subject to a formal assessment carried out by a competent person.</p> <p>Any work area in which staff report that noise distracts or represents a nuisance shall be subject to an assessment to confirm whether there is a case and whether noise levels can be reduced.</p> <p>All new equipment and machinery purchased shall require a check on noise emissions (information from the supplier) and be considered within the procurement decision.</p> <p>Should any use of equipment indicate levels above the first action level of 80 dB(A) or a peak pressure level of 135 dB(C); employees shall be notified and advised of the risk from noise and of the availability of hearing protection which will be provided free of charge.</p> <p>In any area where noise levels exceed the second action level of 85 dB(A) or a peak pressure level of 137db(c). These areas will be designated as noise protection zones and only authorised staff equipped with the appropriate hearing protection may work in those areas. Employees shall be informed of the risk and provided with appropriate hearing protection free of charge.</p> <p>Where it is necessary to wear hearing protection, this will reduce the audibility of fire alarms. Additional warning measures such as visual beacons or strobes should be employed in these areas as well.</p>
4.	<p><b>Controls – Reducing Noise Exposure</b></p> <p>Measures must be put in place to reduce risks from noise exposure to as low a level as is reasonably practicable – even if noise levels are below the lower exposure action value. Consideration must be given as to whether further reduction is practical.</p>

Wherever noise levels may exceed the lower exposure action level (e.g. personal exposure exceeding 80 dB), a risk assessment must be completed.

Formal measures to reduce noise exposure will be introduced if the upper exposure action value is exceeded i.e. personal exposure above 85dB. Provision of hearing protection is not an adequate sole solution in these circumstances.

Personal noise exposure **MUST NOT** exceed the exposure limit value of 87 dB (this measurement must take into account the effect of hearing protection).

Measures to reduce noise exposure may include:

- Replacing tools and equipment with alternatives which create lower levels of noise
- Ensuring all equipment is properly maintained
- Reducing exposure by reducing time exposed to noise
- Shielding or enclosure (of either a piece of equipment or the operator).

### **Hearing Protection**

Hearing protection can be used as an additional measure once noise has been reduced as far as is reasonably practicable by other means or as an interim measure pending noise reduction. It must not be used as the sole method of protection if personal noise exposures exceed the upper action value (85dB).

- Hearing protection must be made available on request if noise exceeds the lower action value (80dB).
- Hearing protection provided must be suitable for the levels and type of noise individuals are exposed to.

Refer to HSP 23 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy for further details.

### **Designation of noise zones**

Any area where noise levels exceed 85 dB (or peak sound level of 137dB(C)) will be designated as 'Hearing Protection Zones' and marked with appropriate signage. Within these areas, wearing of hearing protection will be compulsory, even though exposure may only be for short periods of time.

Detailed guidance on ways of reducing noise exposure can be found in "Controlling Noise at work – Guidance on Regulations" (HSE 2005).

### **5. Health Surveillance**

Health surveillance will also be carried out for new starters or those changing jobs before staff are exposed to noise, where the job has been identified as one requiring health surveillance. This is to provide a baseline assessment. Health Surveillance can be introduced at any time for staff even if staff have already been exposed to high noise levels or if dictated by risk assessment. This would be followed by routine and planned checks as stated above.

Health surveillance will be carried out by the Occupational Health Department. All individual records will be held in confidence. Where appropriate, summary results for groups of employees will be reported back to the relevant manager to indicate the effectiveness of noise management systems.

	<p>Employees must report any symptoms of HAV's to their Manager who will refer them to Occupational Health Service.</p>
6.	<p><b>Training and Information</b></p> <p>All staff that are required to use hearing protection must be trained in the correct use of it, how to look for defects and where to obtain hearing protection. All new employees must receive appropriate training prior to exposure to noise.</p>
7.	<p><b>Limitations of this Policy</b></p> <p>The policy cannot anticipate all eventualities; therefore professional judgement should be used to identify the appropriate course of action needed to protect those who are vulnerable and/or at risk. This judgement should derive from multi-disciplinary team discussion rather than any one individual where possible.</p>
8.	<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>I. GRA 24.I Noise Risk Assessment Template</p>