

# HEALTH & SAFETY NOTICE



HSN-20 ISSUE 03

JANUARY 2002

---

## NOISE

### CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Page 20.2</b>
<b>Legal Responsibilities</b>	<b>Page 20.2</b>
<b>Noise Assessments</b>	<b>Page 20.2</b>
<b>Reduction of Noise Exposure</b>	<b>Page 20.3</b>
<b>Ear Protection Zones</b>	<b>Page 20.4</b>
<b>Health Surveillance</b>	<b>Page 20.5</b>
<b>Training and Information for Staff</b>	<b>Page 20.5</b>

## **NOISE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. This Health and Safety Notice should be read and understood by all employees of Vacman cleaning Ltd who work in environments where noise levels could expose staff them to a risk of hearing damage. Where appropriate, it must also be brought to the attention of Contractor's staff or visitors.

### **LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

2. The Noise at Work Regulations 1989 came into force on 1st January 1990. These Regulations apply to all workplaces. Vacman cleaning Ltd are required to arrange for assessments of the noise levels where there is reason to believe that noisy activities may be exposing staff, students and others to a risk of hearing damage and to take appropriate preventive action where necessary.

- 2.1 The Regulations define three action levels:

First Action Level: a daily personal noise exposure of 85dB(A),

Second Action Level: a daily personal noise exposure of 90dB(A),

Peak Action Level: This relates to short bursts of noise and is approximately equivalent to 140dB.

- 2.2 The company is required to make adequate arrangements for the assessment of noise exposure where this is likely to be at or above the first action level, so that all staff working in the areas concerned can be adequately informed of the steps that can or must be taken to protect their hearing.

- 2.3 Where daily noise exposure is likely to be at or above the second action level the company is required to ensure that exposure is reduced to the lowest level practicable other than by the provision of personal ear protectors.

### **NOISE ASSESSMENTS**

3. A noise assessment will identify the daily noise exposure of anyone who may be at risk of hearing damage and will provide information that can be used to implement control measures.

- 3.1 A competent person must carry out noise assessments by using appropriate monitoring equipment.

- 3.2 As a rough guide, noise is likely to be hazardous at levels wherever people have to shout or have difficulty being heard clearly by someone about 2 metres away. Where there is any doubt, arrangements should be made for measurements of the noise to be taken.
- 3.3 The noise assessment will identify who is at risk at or above the various action levels (paragraph 2.1) and what appropriate control measures (paragraph 4) should be implemented to reduce noise exposure and if required set up ear protection zones (paragraph 5).
- 3.4 The noise assessments will need to be kept up to date. Assessments will need to be reviewed whenever there are significant changes in the work or the equipment used, or any other reason to suppose it is no longer valid.
- 3.5 The competent person (as defined above) must keep records of the assessments made. Copies of these records together with recommendations will be kept by the line manager of the area assessed.

## **REDUCTION OF NOISE EXPOSURE**

4. Irrespective of action levels the company is required to reduce the risk of damage to hearing of its staff from exposure to noise to the lowest level reasonably practicable. There are many ways of reducing workplace noise levels and no single technique will be suitable for every situation. These are discussed in order of priority below.
  - 4.1 Design of workplace. When considering a new workplace, noise emissions and noise exposure can be limited by careful choice of design, layout and the construction materials used for the building. For example, the appropriate use of absorption materials within the building can reduce or limit the effects of reflected sound.
  - 4.2 Elimination of noisy equipment or processes. Generally, this will not be possible, as the activities creating the noise will need to continue. However, if activities cease or change in the area concerned, the equipment may become obsolete and may then be taken out of use.
  - 4.3 Substitution of equipment or processes. Changes in technology can alter the machine or process resulting in lower noise exposure to those in the area.
  - 4.4 Engineering controls.
    - 4.4.1 Equipment may be fitted with buffers, rubber mountings, cushioning, silencers, and etc. to reduce the noise emitted.
    - 4.4.2 Different machines in the area may need to be used at different times to reduce the overall noise levels.

- 4.4.3 Isolation and enclosure of machinery from its surroundings will reduce the level of noise an individual is exposed to. For example, screens and barriers can be erected around the machinery.
- 4.4.4 Maintenance of equipment can be very effective in limiting noise emission. Machines deteriorate with age and use and maintenance can, if carried out regularly, limit the increased noise emissions due to wear.
- 4.4.5 Noise refuges. An office area can be created within a workshop by erecting an acoustically designed enclosure to separate the noisy machinery or processes from those based permanently in the area.
- 4.4.6 If possible, the distance between the noise source and the person should be increased to reduce the level of noise received.
- 4.4.7 Information and training on noise control. This is discussed in paragraph 5.
- 4.4.8 Ear protection must always be considered as the last control measure to be used. All areas where the noise levels exceed 85dB(A) but are not above 90dB(A), suitable hearing protection must be provided and all occupants must be encouraged to wear it. In all areas where the noise levels exceed 90dB(A) or the peak action level, the occupants must be provided with and must wear suitable hearing protection. The areas concerned must be designated as an ear protection zone by means of recognised warning notices. No one must be permitted to enter an ear protection zone without wearing the necessary hearing protection. This is discussed in detail in Vacman- HSN-21

## **EAR PROTECTION ZONES**

- 5. The noise produced by work or study activities being undertaken in some areas may create a significant risk of hearing damage to anyone within that area. In these circumstances the Supervisor or their nominee will designate the area as an ear protection zone. Workplaces designated, as ear protection zones must be marked by the use of the appropriate safety signs. Admission to the area must be restricted to those persons wearing approved hearing protection.
- 6. In ear protection zones, all personnel must wear the hearing protection provided or required. Appropriate safety signs must be posted at the entrance to those areas and a stock of hearing protectors must be kept by the member of staff in charge of the area for issue to visitors.
- 7. Where operations requiring hearing protection are being carried out on a temporary or intermittent basis, temporary ear protection zones will be designated and appropriate signs displayed for the period of the work.

**HEALTH SURVEILLANCE**

- 8. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1992 members of staff working in areas identified by the noise assessments as being potentially damaging to hearing must receive health surveillance by means of an audiometer.

**INFORMATION AND TRAINING FOR STAFF**

- 9. Information and training must be provided for staff working in noisy areas and should include details on noise levels and the damage to their hearing exposure to that noise could cause, what steps staff can take to minimise the risk, how to obtain ear defenders and the requirement for health surveillance. A noise awareness-training seminar can be arranged by contacting a member of the Health and Safety Division.

Approved by:



.....  
Managing Director

Date:...../...../.....