

Independent Guide

How do I know if I need a noise risk assessment?



Independent workplace compliance

Introduction

You are required to have a risk assessment by law if the daily 'personal noise exposure' of any of your employees, or people carrying out work on your behalf, is 80dB (A-weighted) or above.

What is 'personal noise exposure'?

'Personal noise exposure' is a specific calculation that is required by the regulations, and it takes into account the actual noise levels as well as the amount of time your workers are exposed to the noise each day or each week.

If your work is in an industry that is typically noisy, such as construction, engineering, transport, general manufacture, food production or music and entertainment you will normally exceed the 80dB exposure value and you will, therefore, require a noise risk assessment. You will also usually require a noise risk assessment if your building contains a back-up power generator that is tested regularly, or if you are responsible for grounds maintenance using noisy equipment such as chainsaws and mowers.

What is the HSE advice?

The HSE advises that if the noise level that your workers are exposed to is similar to the sound of a crowded restaurant, busy street or vacuum cleaner then it is likely to be around 80dB. A normal conversation will be possible but the noise will be intrusive. If the conditions are like this for 6 to 8 hours a day you will need a noise risk assessment. For a noise that is any louder, or if you have to shout to hold a conversation with someone nearby, you will need a noise risk assessment even if people are exposed for only very short periods during the day.

In addition to the A-weighted noise level (which is the type of noise that applies to most industries), you will also require a risk assessment if the peak sound pressure your employees are exposed to is 135dB (C-weighted) or above. Peak exposures are common in some manufacturing industries, as well as people who work with firearms and fireworks.

If you are not sure whether you need a noise risk assessment, you should err on the side of caution, and carry one out.

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting.

Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 35 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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