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NOISE AND VIBRATION

Noise and vibration are perhaps two hazards that people consider less than some more obvious dangers.

Maybe because the harm is not immediate, and there is generally no pain or immediate loss of function.

Harm will be happening though, longer term and generally irreversible. Far better to protect yourself for the future.

MONITORING

Where assessment shows people may be exposed to noise or vibration an employer may decide to monitor the health of those employees.

Technology, including wearable tech is now available to record exposure to hazards, which helps workers and employers to proactively regulate their exposure.

In addition regular health checks might be recommended although this is generally reactive and will only limit damage from the point where it is identified.

NOISE ACTION LEVELS

The lower exposure action value is a daily or weekly average noise exposure level of 80 dB, at which an employer has to provide information and training and make hearing protection available.

The upper exposure action value is set at a daily or weekly average noise exposure of 85 dB, above which an employer is required to take reasonably practicable measures to reduce noise exposure, such as engineering controls or other technical measures. The use of hearing protection is also mandatory if the noise cannot be controlled by these measures, or while these measures are being planned or carried out.

See HSE guidance for more information.

LONG TERM DAMAGE FROM NOISE

Noise is a likely hazard when two colleagues two metres apart have to raise their voices to talk, or they use noisy tools for more than 30 minutes each day, or their work environment is continually noisy.

Damage from noise can result in tinnitus and varying degrees of irreversible hearing loss.

Noise also becomes a secondary hazard when people can no longer work safely because they cannot communicate effectively.

Always check manufacturers instructions on equipment, for guidance on the correct operation and maintenance procedures, and the correct PPE to wear.

Check the rating for any PPE you are using and the instructions too if possible to ensure you use it effectively.

Always consider the effects of your work on the people around you.

Vibration is a hazard when using vibrating equipment for long periods and/or regularly.

Effects include HAVS (Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome) sometimes known too as "Whitefinger". It can leave an inability to complete fine work with the fingers and pain and discomfort, particularly when it is cold.

Effects also include Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

- Always check manufacturers instructions on any equipment, for their guidance on the correct operation and maintenance procedures, and the correct PPE to wear.
- Always service machinery regularly to ensure it works efficiently and ensure too that all padding around hand grips is in good condition (typically the padding which wears away with use).
- Always consider different ways of working to avoid using vibrating tools for unnecessary periods of time. Re-engineer the whole task if practicable.

Use vibration reducing gloves to reduce the effect on the hands and arms. These provide extra padding to damp the vibrations travelling through to the hands and arms.

Use the Health and Safety Executive guides to give an indication of safer working limits and where required use tech to give accurate measurements of the amount and strength of vibrations.

Measure noise levels.

Eliminate noise altogether (find a different way to complete a task).

Reduce the noise.

Create a physical barrier between you and the noise.

Reduce time exposed to the noise.

Adhere to warnings.

Wear the right PPE.

Eliminate vibration altogether (find a different way to complete a task).

Reduce the vibrations.

Reduce time exposed to the vibrations.

Use vibration reducing tools or PPE.

Read the HSE guidance and ready reckoner charts.

Adhere to warnings.

Measure and assess levels.

LONG TERM DAMAGE FROM VIBRATION

