

Noise at Work Procedure

SOP · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A noise at work procedure is the written process your organisation follows to identify where workplace noise could damage hearing, assess workers' exposure, reduce noise at source, and manage hearing protection and health surveillance where risk remains. It covers steady background noise from plant and machinery as well as loud intermittent noise from tools, music, and processes.

Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and incurable — and it arrives gradually, so nobody notices until the damage is done. That is what makes a procedure necessary: hearing protection handed out informally, worn sometimes, in areas nobody has measured, protects no one and proves nothing.

This template gives you a complete, ready-to-edit procedure: how to spot a noise problem, a step-by-step assessment method, controls in the right order, hearing protection and zone rules, and the health surveillance and records that close the loop.

Purpose and scope

This procedure sets out how [Your company] assesses and controls noise exposure at [site name]. It covers all work activities that create significant noise, including [e.g. machinery, powered tools, kitchen extraction and plant, amplified music, bottling and cellar work], and applies to employees, casual staff, and contractors working in noisy areas.

When to use this procedure

- When any of the indicators below suggests a noise problem in an area or task not yet assessed.
- Before new machinery, tools, or processes are introduced, and before layout changes that move people closer to noise sources.
- At the scheduled review of an existing noise assessment, or when production levels, shift lengths, or equipment condition change.
- After any complaint of ringing ears, muffled hearing after shifts, or difficulty following conversation in a work area.

Roles and responsibilities

- Noise assessment owner ([name/role]): identifies areas needing assessment, arranges measurement where needed, owns the action plan, and keeps this procedure current.
- Managers: enforce hearing protection zone rules, keep protection stocked and maintained, and make sure new starters are briefed before working in noisy areas.
- Workers: wear the hearing protection specified, report damaged protection and any hearing symptoms, and do not defeat noise controls ([e.g. removing machine guards or silencers, propping open acoustic enclosures]).
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[Competent person/external consultant]: carries out noise measurements where the risk assessment needs actual exposure data.

Before you start

- Walk the site and list every noisy area, machine, tool, and task, with typical durations of exposure per shift: record in [system/location].
- Apply the rough indicators: needing to raise your voice to talk at about two metres, ears ringing or sounding muffled after work, or use of noisy powered tools for significant parts of the shift.
- Gather manufacturer noise data for machinery and tools — it is a starting point, though real workplace levels are usually higher than brochure figures.
- Decide whether you need measured data: where the indicators suggest exposures may reach the action values, arrange measurement by a competent person.

Step-by-step noise assessment

1. For each noisy area or task, record the source, who is exposed, for how long per shift, and how close they work to the source.
2. Estimate or measure exposure: use manufacturer data and HSE guidance for an initial estimate; commission measurement by [competent person] where estimates approach the action values.
3. Compare exposures against the current action and limit values in HSE guidance, and record which duties are triggered for each group of workers.
4. Identify controls at source first: can the noisy process be eliminated, done differently, or done with quieter equipment? Record what was considered, including a low-noise purchasing commitment for replacements.
5. Identify engineering and layout controls: damping, silencers, acoustic enclosures or screens, maintenance to stop rattles and worn bearings, and moving noisy plant away from people.
6. Identify organisational controls: job rotation to cut individual exposure time, scheduling noisy tasks when fewer people are around, and rest areas away from noise.
7. Specify hearing protection for the risk that remains — the right attenuation for the noise, compatible with other PPE, and comfortable enough to wear for the full exposure.
8. Write the action plan with owners and dates, brief the affected workers, and set the review date: [frequency, e.g. every two years, or sooner on change].

Hearing protection and hearing protection zones

- Areas where the assessment requires protection are designated hearing protection zones, marked with signage at [locations]; protection is mandatory inside them at all times — a ten-second job is not exempt.
- Protection types provided: [e.g. earmuffs at fixed stations, disposable plugs at dispensers at [locations]]; all provided free of charge.
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Workers are shown how to fit plugs and adjust muffs — badly fitted protection loses much of its performance.

- Protection is checked and replaced on the same basis as other PPE: damaged seals, hardened plugs, and worn headbands are exchanged immediately.

Health surveillance

Where the assessment shows a risk to hearing, [Your company] provides health surveillance (hearing checks) through [provider/arrangement], starting when the person joins the noisy role and repeating at the intervals the provider advises. Results are handled confidentially; [Your company] receives fitness-for-work outcomes, not medical detail.

Anyone whose results show possible hearing damage is referred as the provider advises, and their exposure and controls are reviewed immediately.

Records and review

Noise assessments, measurement reports, the action plan, training and briefing records, protection issue records, and health surveillance outcomes are kept in [system/location] and retained for [period] — health records carry long retention expectations, so check current guidance before disposal.

This procedure is reviewed [frequency], when equipment or layouts change, and whenever health surveillance flags a problem. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Walk the site with the two-metre conversation test before editing anything — list the areas where you have to raise your voice.
2. Chase manufacturer noise data for your main machines now; it takes time and shapes the assessment.
3. Decide early whether you need a competent person to measure — estimates are fine for screening, not for borderline calls.
4. Fill every [bracketed placeholder], and mark hearing protection zones physically before you publish the procedure that references them.
5. Buy quieter equipment as replacements fall due — write that commitment into your purchasing checklist.
6. Brief affected staff on the finished procedure, record it, and set the review date and owner.

Official guidance

- › [HSE — Noise at work](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/noise-at-work-procedure> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.