

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 came into effect on the 1st April 2006 replacing the Noise at Work Regulations 1989. The action levels under the 2005 regulations are lower than for the 1989 regulations.

The most important changes are in respect of the lower values set for the action levels, in particular:

- The first action level is set at an 8-hour average noise exposure level (or daily personal noise exposure level) of 80 dB(A) (previously 85 dB(A)), at which an employer has to provide information and training and make hearing protection available.
- The second action level is set at an 8-hour average noise exposure level (or daily personal noise exposure level) of 85 dB(A) (previously 90 dB(A)), above which the employer is required to take reasonable practical 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 whilst these measures are being planned or carried out.
- There is also an upper limit of 87 dB(A) above which no worker can be exposed (taking ear protection into account).

Whilst the reductions in action levels look small they are, in fact, quite large since the measurement is on a logarithmic scale. A noise reduction of 3 dB(A) is the equivalent to halving the noise.

Members are advised to carry out a risk assessment as soon as possible and if there is a possibility of any breach of the regulations to seek professional advice and have a full noise survey carried out by a qualified person. Warning notices should also be erected at the entrances to areas or workshops or where the noise level exceeds 80 dB(A). You are also advised to attach warning notices to all machines where the noise level is 85 dB(A) or above.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is the department responsible for overseeing this RRO.

Further information on the Noise at Work Regulations 2005 is available on the HSE website, www.hse.gov.uk