

Noise - occupational noise >

This information bulletin provides a guide to regulation 56 of the [Work Health \(Occupational Health & Safety\) Regulations](#). The intent of the Regulation is to set acceptable levels to ensure workers are not exposed to occupational noise levels which could lead to long term damage to their hearing or health.

Regulation 56 – Noise

Regulation 56 states:

- 1) An employer shall ensure that the worker is not exposed at a workplace to noise exceeding:
 - a) an 8 hour equivalent continuous A-weighted sound pressure level, LAeq, 8h, of 85 dB(A) as determined; or
 - b) a peak sound pressure level, Lpeak, of 140 dB(lin) as measured, in accordance with [AS 1269](#).
- 2) For the purposes of sub-regulation (1), exposure to noise is taken to be measured at the worker's ear position without taking into account any protection, which may be afforded by hearing protection equipment.

Notes: The level of 85dB LAeq, 8h is the amount of noise equivalent to being exposed to a level of 85dB(A) continuously for 8 hours. Because of the large range in noise levels that can be detected by the ear, the decibel scale is not a normal scale. Instead, a 3dB increase in noise level, though barely perceptible, corresponds to a doubling of sound energy and hence causes the same damage in half the time.

A noise level of 85dB(A) is approximately that at which a person talking normally (ie. without raising their voice) could be heard over the noise from a distance of one metre away. This level of 85dB(A) has been set from studies of long term exposure of workers to noise, and is the noise level at which some measurable loss of hearing may occur if a person is exposed to that noise for 8 hours a day for their working life.

The level of 140Db (lin) is a noise level at which damage to hearing may occur instantaneously on exposure. An example of 140dB(lin) is a jet engine at 25 metres. At no time should the ear be directly exposed to this noise level.

These levels are in line with the Standard adopted by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission

Regulation 56 should not be read in isolation but in the general context of the *Work Health (Occupational Health & Safety) Regulations*. In particular, Part 6, Division 1 - General Obligations in Relation to Workplace Hazards.

This part deals with the responsibility of an employer to identify a hazard, such as noise, assess the risk to health and safety and implement effective control measures.

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Control is to be achieved, as far as is practicable, through the progressive application of one or more of the following measures.

- The elimination of the hazard from the workplace;
- The substitution of the hazard with something that is a lesser hazard;
- The isolation of the hazard from the worker;
- The control of the hazard by engineering means;
- The use of personal protective equipment.

This is known as the hierarchy of controls. Personal protective equipment should only be used where preferred alternatives are impracticable.

The regulations also cover monitoring and health surveillance and the need to provide appropriate training of workers particularly in the use of protective equipment.

The other specific regulations which may need to be consulted are:

Reg 71 Personal Protective Equipment; and

Reg 77 Hearing Protection (Refer to Acoustics - Hearing Conservation)

Codes of practice

The following approved Codes of Practice provides guidance in relation to occupational noise:

- Australian Standard 1269 - Hearing Conservation
- NOHSC National Code of Practice for Noise Management and Protection of Hearing at Work ([NOHSC: 2009](#))

Other references:

The following references may provide additional information and guidance in relation to occupational noise and its control:

- "Occupational Noise Management" NT WorkSafe
- "Noise Control" National Occupational Health and Safety Commission.

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