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Level 2

Health screening and health surveillance for noise induced hearing loss

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Issue record

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Compliance

This Network Rail standard is mandatory and shall be complied with by Network Rail and its contractors if applicable from 01 March 2009.

When this standard is implemented, it is permissible for all projects that have formally completed GRIP Stage 4 to continue to comply with the Issue of any relevant Network Rail Standards current when GRIP Stage 4 was reached and not to comply with requirements contained herein, unless the designated Standard Owner has stipulated otherwise in the accompanying Briefing Note.

Reference documentation

SI 2005: 1643	The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
L108	Controlling Noise at Work, The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005, Guidance on Regulations
SI 1995:3163	The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
NR/L3/INV/0104	Work Instruction – Reporting of occupational ill-health
NR/L3/MTC/0003	Risk Control Sheets
NR/SP/OHS/00102	Work Activity Risk Assessment
NR/SP/OHS/00122	Specialist Risk assessment – Workplace Noise
INDG362 (rev1)	Noise at Work - Guidance for employers on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
INDG363 (rev1)	INDG363 (rev1) Protect your hearing or Lose it! - Pocket size leaflet for employees
NR/PRC/MTC/SE0120	Supply and maintenance of Personal Protective Equipment

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the system of health screening and health surveillance for employees and prospective employees of Network Rail whose health may be at risk due to exposure to noise at work.

The system of health surveillance is in response to the requirements of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005. Implementation of the standard shall enable Network Rail to comply with its legal obligations under the regulations and meet its duty of care to those with an existing condition.

The health surveillance programme is designed to:

- establish the baseline hearing status of an employee;
- detect the early signs of hearing damage, identify and protect employees at increased risk through further reducing or eliminating noise exposure and confirm whether they are fit to continue undertaking work exposing them to noise;
- assist Network Rail in their assessment and control strategy for noise by providing information on the prevalence of hearing damage amongst employees; and
- give employees advice on personal risks and reinforce the importance of following the prescribed safe system of work.

This health surveillance programme is in addition to the requirements for audiometric testing within the competence and medical fitness standard requirements for staff in a safety critical work post, or other post as required by Network Rail Company and Group Standards.

2 Scope

This standard describes pre-employment/pre-placement health screening for hearing damage which is undertaken on all prospective employees who, by the nature of their proposed employment, may be regularly exposed to noise above the upper exposure action values and on all existing employees transferring to work where they may be regularly exposed to noise above the upper exposure action values.

3 Definitions

Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL)

Hearing damage that develops as the result of exposure to continuous or intermittent high levels of noise.

Tinnitus

The sensation of a sound in the ear or head that is not being produced by an external source.

NOTE This can either be as a sound of high-pitched ringing, hissing or whistling or a low pitched rushing or buzzing. It can also be a quite complex sound, like the roar of an ocean. The sounds may be constant or come and go.

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Audiometry

The testing of a person's ability to hear at various sound frequencies.

NOTE The test is performed with the use of electronic equipment called an audiometer and undertaken in a sound proof booth. This testing is administered by a trained technician or a competent Occupational Health Nurse or Physician. Audiometry testing is used to identify and diagnose hearing loss.

Audiogram

The product of audiometry.

NOTE It is a graphical representation on paper, showing at specific frequencies the loudness (intensity) levels that a person can hear with each ear.

decibel (dB)

A logarithmic measurement unit that describes the relative loudness of a sound.

A-weighting (A)

The frequency weighting that takes into account the response of the human ear to sound, in particular its sensitivity to sound at different frequencies.

C-weighting (C)

A standard weighting of the audible frequencies used for the measurement of Peak Sound Pressure level.

Lower exposure action values

A daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 80dB (A) or a peak sound pressure of 135dB(C).

Upper exposure action values

A daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 85dB (A); and a peak sound pressure of 137dB(C).

Exposure limit values (ELV)

A daily or weekly personal noise exposure of 87dB (A) or a peak sound pressure of 140dB (C).

Peak sound pressure

Greatest value of the absolute instantaneous sound pressure within a specified time interval.

Weekly personal noise exposure (LEP, w)

A measure of the total noise received by an employee during the working week, taking into account the level and duration of exposure, ascertained in accordance with Schedule 1 Part 2 of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.

Daily personal noise exposure (LEP, d)

A measure of the total noise received by an employee during the working day, taking into account the level and duration of exposure, ascertained in accordance with Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005