

MINUTES OF THE 10TH MEETING OF THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY NOISE TASK GROUP (EINTG) ON 21 MAY 2002 AT HSE ROSE COURT, LONDON

Attendees

Stan Hardy – Confederation of British Metalforming
David Frost – Corus
Richard Griffiths – Machine Tool Technologies Association
David Powell – Association of British Insurers
Peter Wilson – Industrial Noise and Vibration Centre
Tim Humphreys – Association of British Insurers
Tony Romaniuk – Motor Industry Safety Group
Bob Hanlon – Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) West Midlands
Martin Bevan – General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union (GMB)
Bob Taylor – British Turned Parts Manufacturers Association (BTPMA)
Bill Owen - BTPMA
Gary Booton – EEF (EINTG Chairman)
David Allison – Marine Painting Forum
Tim Ward – Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Technology Directorate
Brian Coles – HSE Health Directorate Physical Agents Unit
Graham Watson – HSE (EINTG Secretary) Engineering and Utilities Sector

Apologies

Mr Leverton – RAF Lynham
David Brotherton – Metalforming Machinery Makers' Association (MMMA)
Matt Albutt – MMMA
Ken Hardman – Association of Drum Manufacturers
Alan Robson – Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions
Colin Holdhusen – Corus
John Rowse – Transport and General Workers Union
David Knox – Amicus
Rob Walker – Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders
Tony McCarthy – National Union of Domestic Appliances & General Operatives Union
Marjory Mitchell – HSE Health Unit
Rebecca Hathaway – HSE Health Directorate

Introductions

Gary Booton welcomed Brian Coles who was standing in for Jeane Anderson. Brian explained that a replacement for Jeane should soon be in post.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed subject to the following changes:
List of attendees – change Bob Hanlon EEF to EEF West Midlands; Physical Agents Noise Directive – change “Bob Hanlon queried what the effect would be of a person working for more than 8 hours” to “Bob Hanlon highlighted what the effect.” and change the dates of the next meetings to reflect the correct year.

Members discussed the length of the minutes and agreed that more concise minutes would be acceptable.

Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Review of HSE noise guidance - Brian Coles responding to a query raised at the previous meeting believed that the views of safety representatives had not specifically been sought although their views may have been included with those of employees. Concern was expressed that as a result the review would only reflect a partial point of view. Graham Watson was asked to feed this concern to HSE. *Update:* the researchers who undertook the review have confirmed that while Trade Union Representatives were not specifically targeted their views will have been included with those of the employee group. As a result of the review HSE is rationalising its guidance producing a single leaflet for employers and a single leaflet/pocket card for employees. The exact status of these leaflets was not known. Graham Watson undertook to look into this. *Update:* Drafts of the leaflets were circulated at the 8th EINTG meeting and were subsequently amended to take into account comments received from some EINTG members. The leaflets have now been sent to the printers.

Physical Agents (Noise) Directive – concerns were expressed regarding the reference in the minutes to employers having to take into account their employees' exposure to noise when not at work. This raised issues of infringement of personal privacy and created problems of a practical nature. Tim Ward stated employers will only need to take into account information that comes to their attention, they will not be expected to look into their employees private lives.

EINTG Membership

The Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) may become papers only members although this has to be confirmed. Members agreed having the RNID as a member would add weight to what the Task Group is trying to achieve. A revised membership list will be e-mailed reflecting recent changes in contact details for EINTG members. A hard copy is included for members without e-mail (Document 1).

Action: Graham Watson

EINTG – Mission Statement, Terms of Reference and Business Plan

Members were asked to review the documents to ensure they remain current. During the resulting discussion the following was agreed:

Mission statement – include reference to the Association of British Insurers as Task Group members. Amended wording to be agreed by e-mail to reflect Task Group members working together. Change “Develop good practice solutions..” to “Highlight good practice solutions...” , as the Task Group does not have the technical resources needed to develop solutions via design/manufacture.

Action: Graham Watson

Terms of reference – change “Ensure the business plan can be integrated with the objectives set for the HSE Engineering and Utilities Sector Plan” to “...the objectives set for the HSE Noise Priority Topic.”

The role of the EINTG was discussed in terms of providing leadership to the engineering industry on noise issues and its relationship with the HSE. The EINTG by actively involving people in the industry in noise issues and seeking to further advance the cause was seen to strengthen HSE's work in this area. Richard Griffiths saw the work of the Task Group extending beyond supporting the HSE and instead of an advisory body it was more a negotiation body. If the EINTG wished to further develop this role it should be included in the terms of reference. However, at a previous meeting it was agreed that due to the diverse nature of the membership, lobbying and associated activities were out with the EINTG's remit. The issue of the EINTG's role extending beyond simply giving advice will be further discussed at the next meeting.

The EINTG's performance against its business plan was reviewed. There has been little legislative change to respond to, however this will change when the Physical Agents (Noise) Directive is implemented. Consultation on how this will be done will commence later this year and a Consultative Document issued in 2003. It was agreed the EINTG should be involved in this at an early stage. The date against this item on the business plan is therefore to be changed to 02/03. The revised mission statement, terms of reference and business plan are attached as documents 2, 3 and 4.

The introductory leaflet has to be amended to take into account comments received. *Update*: this has now been done the finished leaflet is attached as document 5. Also attached (Document 6) is a press release issued by the EEF to announce the availability of the leaflet.

It looks promising that the EINTG will get European funding to launch the web site. To help secure the funds the EINTG needs to demonstrate a broad base approach hence members are asked to forward their support of the work of the Task Group to Gary Booton. A copy of the application form seeking funding for the web site from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work is attached for information (Document 7). The HSE has already agreed to the use of case studies from “Sound Solutions” on the web site, which will be a source of good practice solutions. Members were asked to supply suitable material for inclusion on the web site.

Action: Members

Martin Bevan explained the GMB is setting up a regional web site based on a national web site and that he will be interested in supporting the EINTG web site. Peter Wilson also agreed to provide a few engineering case studies.

Action: Martin Bevan and Peter Wilson

No press articles on the EINTG have been produced, however the editor of the Safety and Health Practitioner is willing to include an article in their July issue. Gary Booton will circulate the article to members for early site. Stan Hardy also agreed to do a newspaper article advising on the damage that people can inflict on their own hearing through their personal activities. The possibility of raising the combined impact of exposure to occupational noise and noise at home via a trade union journal was also discussed. Martin Bevan agreed to look into this with regards to GMB communications and to see if it would be possible to include an article on the Task Group.

Action: Gary Booton, Stan Hardy and Martin Bevan

It was agreed that item 4 on the business plan seeking to extend the Task Group's membership base has been achieved and can be removed from the plan. To remove reference to the HSE Sector Plan in item 5 as the Engineering and Utilities Sector Objective on noise has been subsumed into the HSE Noise Priority Topic. While none of the initiatives detailed in item 6 of the business plan have been achieved steps are being made in the right direction.

The difficulty in getting machine suppliers to take noise seriously was discussed. There was general agreement that they could do a lot more although there was insufficient pressure to get them to do it. Machine suppliers were felt to be more active in relation to hand-arm vibration partly because the number of suppliers involved is far less than with noise. Consequently they were easier to target. Many new machines are felt to be quieter than older ones partly because direct drives are increasingly used to replace moving parts as part of a cost cutting exercise. There is a need to sell noise control as a cost cutting exercise and not just for moral reasons. Often people buy cheap but noisy machines only to then have to spend money on noise enclosures. Overall they would have been financially better off buying a more expensive but quieter machine but as different budgets are often involved people fail to see the cost of the whole package. It was agreed to continue the discussion at the next meeting. Members were asked to come to the meeting with ideas on how best to tackle the problem.

Action: Members

EINTG Guidance

Graham Watson informed members of approximate printing costs for HSE to print information sheets for the EINTG. A suite of 11 sheets will cost £5000 for single colour ink and £9000 for 2 colour ink (print run of 10 000). While HSE will

do the design and artwork they will not pay for printing as the sheets will be badged under the EINTG and unlike HSE Information Sheets will be in colour. The EEF have agreed to distribute the sheets to their members. Funding is required to pay for the printing costs. The Association of British Insurers agreed to help with this provided other members also contribute. Other members are asked to consider what funding they can provide.

Action: Members

A toolbox talk pack for employees was also proposed, employee involvement being crucial to what the EINTG is trying to achieve. Martin Bevan agreed to look further into this from an employees' point of view. Bob Hanlon had been asked to do a similar thing for EEF West Midlands and also volunteered to help. It was agreed to further discuss this issue at the next meeting.

Action: Martin Bevan and Bob Hanlon

Noise assessments

The issue of what constitutes a good noise assessment was discussed. Peter Wilson presented his thoughts on the matter. He believed many noise assessments are too long. If managers are given too much information they will not use it. The INVC try to keep their noise assessments as short as possible to encourage people to do something about it. Their assessments contain conclusions and recommendations including short and medium term actions, a summary of results and a technical appendix. Lepd data is contained in a table identifying the areas where people will be exposed to Lepds of 85 or 90 as the aim is to keep it as simple as possible. This benefits employees by making the assessment easier for them to understand. To make the data readily retrievable and searchable the assessments are provided in digital format on CD Rom.

The problems of assessing noise in fluid activities such as ship repair and construction were discussed. One solution is to assess a worst-case scenario. There have however been problems in setting up such a scenario in ship repair. The role of professional bodies in improving the quality of noise assessments was also discussed. The Institute of Acoustics for example run noise assessment courses including an update course.

Tim Ward made a distinction between what the INVC include in their noise assessments and what the minimum legal requirement is. The HSE for example does not require the inclusion of an action plan. A large number of noise assessments that Tim has seen were simply noise surveys. Unless the assessment shows who is exposed and to what, it is not a noise assessment. Martin Bevan referred to the model GMB noise agreement circulated to members. Unfortunately this was a very old one sent to him by mistake. He will send out a new one.

Action: Martin Bevan

Gary Booton thanked the members who had sent in their noise assessments, and asked how the EINTG should take this issue forward. Bob Hanlon felt this should be by producing a paper indicating what a good noise assessment should contain and what it need not contain including frequently asked questions. Bob, Tim Ward and Peter Wilson volunteered to work together on this.

Action: Bob Hanlon, Tim Ward and Peter Wilson

A paper copy of the noise section of HSE's Health Directorate's web site was distributed, enclosed (Document 8) for people not at the meeting. This included a noise calculator available on the web site, which can calculate overall daily noise exposures using noise levels and exposure times. The website address www.hse.gov.uk/hthdir/noframes/noise.htm is on the bottom of the handout.

Sandwell Health Action Zone

This is a broad based occupational health project seeking to raise the profile of occupational health, help people identify solutions and point them in the direction of further assistance. The relevance of this as a possible strategy that the EINTG could adopt was considered. This could involve the EINTG promulgating good practice from one geographic area to another. The EEF in conjunction with a partner may be able to put together a bid to get the necessary funding from HSE's research budget. As the Workwell project (part of the Sandwell initiative, see www.haznet.org.uk/hazs/hazmap/h_sandwell.asp) is already covering noise it was agreed to invite Barry Wilkes from Workwell to attend the next meeting to provide feedback on the initiative including what works and what does not.
Update: Barry Wilkes has agreed to attend the October meeting.

Internet sites

Minutes of some EINTG meetings are now on the Engineering and Utilities Sector's web page on HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk/fod/engship.htm There are plans to put noise control data on the website, Tim Ward will keep members updated.

Action: Tim Ward

Engineering and Utilities Sector Objective

A report detailing the outcome of the objective was circulated (Document 9 - enclosed for members not at the meeting). The objectives of ensuring that in those premises visited by HSE Inspectors there was an adequate noise assessment and a noise action plan have largely not been met. Many employers also seem to overly rely on the use of ear protectors rather than reducing noise exposure at source. The report will be issued as a Sector Information Minute for use by HSE Inspectors, however this will be a fully open document.

HSE Noise Priority Topic

Details of the Risk control indicators to be used by HSE Inspectors to assess employers' performance in 3 key noise areas were circulated with the meeting's agenda. It is expected that where employers are performing badly enforcement action will be taken. Follow up visits to evaluate the noise Single Issue Inspection Project (SIIP) are also to be made. Graham Watson agreed to provide feedback on progress made with the Noise Priority Topic and the SIIP at the next meeting.

Action: Graham Watson

The Physical Agents (Noise) Directive

Agreement has still to be reached on a number of proposed amendments. It is unlikely this will happen before the end of the Spanish Presidency. The following Danish Presidency will not have much time to progress the issue. Formal conciliation on the Directive is likely due to concerns with some of the amendments. Members' views were sought on the proposed peak noise action value of 200 pascals. Complying with such a level was not thought to be too difficult. Members were asked to raise any issues regarding this with Brian Coles. Members' views were also sought on the proposed right to audiometry testing at 80 dB(A). The EEF's thoughts on this issue have already been raised. At such a noise level Peter Wilson saw it as a paper exercise.

Noise research

Reference was made to research looking into the effectiveness of the Noise at Work Regulations. Details of which had already been circulated. Volunteer companies to take part in the research are wanted. Reference was also made to research looking into the possible combined effect of exposure to solvents and noise on hearing, details of which had also previously been circulated. The research is supported by EU funding and will involve site visits, volunteer companies are sought. Gary Booton will circulate additional information on this.

Action: Garry Booton

Any other business

Brief details were given of the Noise Action Day taking place on 22nd May. This was organised by the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection. This related primarily to environmental noise in general and was not of much relevance to the EINTG.

Dates and venues of next meetings

29/10/02 HSE Birmingham

21/01/03 EEF West Midlands - Birmingham