

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**Control of Noise at Work Regulations****Communications plan April 2005**

To make progress towards HSE's targets for noise, communications has a central role to play – to reach key employers and workers and to influence them to take the appropriate action. Although the noise programme plan and communications plan are not yet fully developed, the timetable for introducing the new regulations requires us to push ahead with promotional activities on a tactical basis. The following is an outline for those tactical activities.

Communication objectives

1. Raise awareness of new legal requirements by February 2006, in workplaces where noise needs to be controlled – but particularly in construction and manufacturing.
2. Successfully manage the risk of damaging media coverage – in particular to avoid ill-informed comment about how the regulations may affect the music industry, offices, schools.

Target Audiences and stakeholders

The total number of employees, in all sectors, exposed to noise above 80 dB(A) is about 2.2 million. Many of these workers are employed in the following sectors.

- Manufacturing - employers and employees.
- Construction - employers and employees.
- Music and entertainment industry - employers, staff and performers.
- Local authorities - EHOs.
- Other workplaces where control of noise can be necessary – for example, agriculture, transport, mines and quarries - education and call centres.
- Trade Unions
- Employers' representatives, including small firms

Key messages

1. Compliance with the Regulations would eventually prevent occupational noise-induced hearing loss.
2. The new Regulations are the result of an EU-led initiative, which the UK was able to support after difficult and detailed negotiation.
3. There are practical, low-cost measures that employers can take to reduce exposure to noise.

Risks

There has been some negative interest from the national press and, although coverage has been limited to date - we are aware of only two news pieces (Independent 29 March 2005 and Daily Telegraph 20 April 2005), speculating on the impact of the regulations on offices, clubs/pubs, orchestras and schools - there is a risk of further examples of damaging coverage before and after February 2006.

Any media inquiries will be answered robustly, as outlined in the attached handling plan and Q&A briefing. Press office will prepare for key events – for example publication of music industry's guidance (date TBA). We will continue to minimise the risk of negative coverage through direct engagement with stakeholders in key industries and through promotional activity – although scope will remain for journalists to write speculative stories.

Stakeholder engagement

HSE has engaged extensively with stakeholders during the negotiation of the directive and the public consultation on the regulations. This will continue up to and beyond February 2006. Promotional work, described below, will be delivered in partnership with stakeholders such as EEF, IOSH and RNID. The main industries where noise needs to be controlled are manufacturing and construction. But other industries such as music and entertainment, agriculture, transport, mines and quarries, and education are also affected.

HSE is engaged with the music and entertainment industry which is now developing specific guidance - by 2008, in line with the directive. HSC's Textiles Industry Advisory Committee is developing practical solutions for machinists and an "action on noise" campaign in the textiles, footwear and clothing industries. A noise working group in the Engineering Sector has produced a "toolbox talk" on noise for small engineering firms.

Further stakeholder engagement will be developed as the regulations become established and awareness widens, and we will seek opportunities for initiatives in partnership with suppliers and manufacturers and other bodies with an interest in controlling noise at work.

Promotional activity

- 27-28 April 05: initial launch of European Week on Noise
IOSH event in partnership with HSE.
- Sept/Oct 2005: Noise and Vibration roadshows for manufacturing industry (CEOs, managers, H&S advisors)
Nine regional roadshows across UK.
Partnership: HSE and EEF.
- Sept 2005: launch revised website
Highlight "Sound Solutions" audio case studies.
- 11-12 Oct 2005: Noise Reduction at work conference
European Week on Noise – in partnership with IOSH, RNID, Trade ass'ns, Trade Unions.
- Oct 2005: publish free leaflets on the new legal requirements and HSE's guidance, for employers. Hard copy and web. To include 4-page summary leaflet.
- Oct 2005: publish free pocket cards on the new legal requirements and HSE's guidance, for employees. Hard copy and web.
- Oct 2005: Publish detailed statutory guidance, priced.

- Dec 2005/Jan 2006: local Noise and Vibration seminars/Awareness days.
- 15 Feb 2006: promotional work to recognise that the Noise Regulations are now in force – eg briefing for specialist journalists.
- Spring 2006: Further promotional activity to reinforce awareness of new regulations.

Press Handling

Handling plan attached

Costs

TBA

