NOISE IN THE WORKPLACE AND ‘BUY-QUIET’ POLICY

Is it possible that noise in your workplace is affecting your hearing?

Do you experience:

- Difficulty hearing others speak
- Ringing in your ears
- Fatigue/tiredness
- Reduced concentration
- Difficulties hearing the alarm when it rings

IF YOU ANSWER YES TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE QUESTIONS, YOUR WORKPLACE MIGHT BE TO NOISY

Vibrations from machinery is a major culprit of noise in the workplace. This refers to noise that is caused by the frequent movement of parts in machinery. Harmful vibration may result in:

- Exposure to noise
- Equipment damage by loosening the machine parts

What is ‘Buy Quiet’?

It is a practice that encourages employing strategies that range from reducing noise given off existing machinery up to buying Quiet-by-design equipment.

COST OF WORKPLACE NOISE REDUCTION

Long term costs related to hearing conservation include budget expenses on:

- Noise monitoring
- Hear conservation training
- Record keeping
- Medical Surveillance
- PPE
- Programme management

Regulations 9 and 10 of the Noise Induced Hearing Loss Regulations (2003), states that no employer or self employed person shall require or permit any person to enter any workplace under his or her control where such person will be exposed to noise exposed to noise at or above the 85 dBA noise-rating limit.

A workplace without a noise problem

- Reduce the charges of hearing loss
- Reduces hearing conservation related costs
- Improves ability to communicate
- Improves safety and productivity
- Creates a safe, productive, comfortable environment
Why is Quiet-by-design better than PPE?

- It controls the noise problem at the source
- It reduces costs related to hearing conservation and legal claims
- It promotes efficient work process

What about retrofitting?

Retrofit controls reduce the noise from existing noise sources (machinery). It is often more difficult to retrofit controls on existing equipment.

A comparison of 4 methods of noise control

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<tr>
<th>PPE</th>
<th>Quiet-by-design</th>
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<tr>
<td>![PPE Image]</td>
<td>![Quiet-by-design Image]</td>
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| Uncomfortable, not worn consistently & depends on fit | Control the noise at source |
| No guarantee of 100% protection | Reduces hearing conservation related costs |
| Workers have differing susceptibility to hearing loss | Manufactures assume financial & design risk |
| Can hinder communication | Buyer specifies noise emission criteria |

What can I do?

**As the employee**

- Be proactive
- Identify areas of concern
- Inform others to the value of ‘buy quiet’ practice

**As the employer**

- Have a formalised ‘buy quiet’ policy
- Corporate police sends a message to vendors to take note of ‘buy quiet’ requirements
- Have publicly visible programs to set an example to employees and other organisations

![Cartoon Image]

This pamphlet was produced by NIOH. For more information or assistance log a query with our Occupation Hygiene Section at www.nioh.ac.za or contact us at 011 712 6400

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