

SAFETY HEALTH ENVIRONMENT WORKCOVER SUSTAINABILITY (SHEWS) HEARING CONSERVATION PROCEDURES

PURPOSE

CQUniversity is to ensure the health and safety of staff, students, and others. These procedures detail practices to protect staff, students, contractors and visitors who are at risk of developing noise induced hearing loss. This program addresses, as far as it is practicable, guidance and advice on all aspects of noise management, noise exposure and control measures.

All CQUniversity faculties, divisions, directorates and campuses are to comply with these procedures.

PROCEDURES

1 Hearing Protection Areas

Areas where excessive noise cannot be practically controlled by engineering or administrative strategies, shall be designated 'hearing protection area' and require signposting as per AS 1319 (Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment).

No staff member, student, or visitor shall enter a hearing protection area during normal operation, even for brief periods, unless they wear appropriate personal hearing protection. Ear muffs or plugs providing suitable attenuation should be provided to staff and maintained by the work unit. Advice on appropriate selection of protective equipment is available from the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit.

In cases where students are required to work in hearing protection areas, the work unit has authority to decide who should provide suitable hearing protection. Students are to be provided with information regarding the noise levels and the requirements for suitable attenuated hearing protection.

2 Education and Training

Staff and students who are required to work in 'hearing protection areas' shall receive education in all aspects of these procedures, to ensure that they understand the health risks associated with noise exposure, and that they comply with these procedures.

Training objectives are to be established which result in:

- detailing risks to hearing;
- steps that can be taken to reduce these risks; and
- the use and maintenance of hearing protectors.

3 Audiometric Testing

All new appointees to CQUniversity who may be required to work in, or in the vicinity of excessive noise shall be required to undergo a baseline audiometric test within the first two months of their appointment. This will be conducted at the University's expense and costed to the employee's faculty, division, directorate or campus.

All current employees who work in, or in the vicinity of excessive noise shall be required to undertake a hearing test initially and then on a two yearly basis. This test will be conducted at the University's expense and costed to the employee's faculty, division, directorate or campus.

Any existing employee being redeployed to a position exposing them to such levels shall also be tested.

At the time of a hearing test, new and current employees will be requested to fill out a [Hearing Test Information and Consent for Use of Data Form](#). This form is to be forwarded to the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit.

To initiate a referral for a hearing test the employee's supervisor shall complete the [Hearing Test Referral Form](#) and forward to the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit. The referral shall be registered and forwarded to the facility that is to conduct the initial test. The results of the test shall be delivered to the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit.

The results and information derived from the test shall not be communicated to anyone, other than at the written request of the employee tested. In the event of abnormal results the employee will be requested to undergo a repeat test. These tests should occur on different days, after at least 16 hours in quiet (less than 75 dB(a)) conditions. If the hearing impairment is confirmed at this second examination, the employee will be offered specialist audio-logical or medical referral. The test results and their implications will be made known to the employee.

All staff registered as working in high risk areas will have a final audiometric test upon the cessation of employment with the University. It shall be the responsibility of the immediate supervisor to ensure this final test is conducted on receipt of their resignation. The supervisor is to complete the [Hearing Test Referral Form](#).

4 Rehabilitation

Employees diagnosed with a noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) may have acquired this through exposure to excessive noise in the University work environment, at a previous place of employment, during leisure activities, from a medical condition, or as the result of a combination of these. A comprehensive noise assessment of the employee's workplace and medical assessment is required to determine if the hearing loss may be related to noise exposure from the employee's work activities within the University.

If noise induced hearing loss has been diagnosed, the employee is entitled to lodge a worker's compensation claim. A CQUniversity [Incident/Hazard Report Form](#) must also be lodged. The results from the hearing test will be forwarded to the assessor handling the claim.

The assessor will then contact the employee and the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit to advise whether the application for compensation has been accepted. The Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit is to manage the worker's compensation claim.

CQUniversity's [Rehabilitation Policy](#) will be followed where staff have a diagnosed noise induced hearing loss and a supporting medical certificate.

5 Risk Management

Noise assessments vary depending on the severity of the risks at the workplace, the number of persons at risk and the information already available on noise levels. The Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit will assist faculties/divisions/directorates/campuses in the assessment of reported noise hazards. Reported noise hazards will be evaluated against the relevant legislation and appropriate Australian Standards. If the need arises for noise

measurements to be undertaken, the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit will provide advice and assistance.

A noise hazard identification checklist (Appendix 1 of the [Noise Code of Practice 2004](#)) is to be conducted in an area that has been identified as being likely to exceed the prescribed noise threshold level. This checklist is used as a preliminary assessment to indicate whether a more detailed assessment is required. Completed checklists are to be forwarded to the Health, Safety, Environment and Training Unit for further action.

Where the noise environment fails to meet the requirements, all practical action will be taken to control and reduce noise emissions in that area. The following control measures are listed in order of the most effective way of managing risks from noise.

Information about instruments used in the monitoring of noise at the workplace is given at Appendix 2 of the [Noise Code of Practice 2004](#).

The options available for control of noise are prioritised below.

- **Elimination:** Removing the hazard or its source from the workplace.
- **Engineering Controls:** Physically altering the work environment such as, changing or altering the source of the noise through the use of closures, silencers, or modifications to machines.
- **Administrative Controls:** Designing jobs to reduce exposures.
- **Personal Protective Equipment:** Using devices to protect the body. One control measure may prevent the risks from exposure to excessive noise, or a combination of control measures may be used. Elimination, engineering and administrative control measures are preferred because they actually reduce a person's exposure to noise. Personal hearing protectors reduce the risks from exposure to excessive noise but do not actually reduce noise exposure.

6 Elimination – New Plant and Workplaces

There are several cost-effective noise control measures that can be used when purchasing new plant or setting up a new workplace.

Invitations for tender for the supply of new plant should specify a maximum acceptable level of noise emission. Noise emission data is to be obtained from the supplier. A suggested pro-forma for presentation of information on noise levels generated by plant can be obtained from Table A of the [Noise Code of Practice 2004](#).

New workplaces and installation sites for new plant in existing workplaces are to be designed and constructed to ensure exposure to noise is as low as possible. If new plant is likely to expose persons to excessive noise, design features are to include engineering noise control measures.

7 Elimination – Existing Plant and Workplaces

Once a noise assessment has been carried out and the need to reduce the noise exposure is established, the task of controlling the noise can be addressed. Priority should be given to those noise sources that contribute the highest noise exposure levels to the largest number of persons. The need for noise control should be taken into account when deciding production methods or processes.

There are two basic engineering noise control measures for managing noise levels:

- engineering control of the source; and
- engineering control of the noise transmission path.

Engineering control of the source is the preferred method of permanently removing the noise problem of all noise-emitting machinery or processes. All noise-emitting objects generate airborne energy (noise) and structure-borne energy vibrations. The treatment of these noise problems may require modification, partial redesign or replacement of the noise-emitting object.

8 Appropriate Risk Identification and Management Process

Appropriate risk identification and management process is to include:

- identifying tasks in which there is potential for noise exposure;
- identifying all persons likely to be exposed to excessive noise;
- obtaining information on noise sources and associated work practices helping choose appropriate hearing protectors for persons exposed to noise according to AS/NSZ 1269 (Occupational Noise Management) Part 3 and comply with the requirements of AS/NSZ 1270 (Acoustics – Hearing Protectors);
- defining hearing protection areas at work with the approved signage as per AS 1319 (Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment);
- evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce noise exposures;
- providing induction and on-going training to all persons;
- developing of monitoring procedures;
- arranging for reporting defects in plant or the workplace that are likely to cause exposure to excessive noise;
- advising the purpose and nature of audiometric testing;
- advising the obligations of employers and employees.

9 All Staff Responsible for the Supervision or Teaching of Staff and Students

All staff responsible for the supervision or teaching of staff and students are responsible for:

- ensuring that individuals under their supervision have been educated regarding these procedures;
- understanding the risk to health and that they must comply with their responsibilities as outlined in the procedures;
- advising their supervisor of difficulties in achieving compliance.

10 Persons Conducting Noise Assessment

A person who carries out a noise assessment shall meet the:

- competency requirements of Appendix A of part 1 of AS/NZS 1269 (Occupational Noise Management) including knowledge of the aim of an assessment; and
- correct way of using instruments and their limitations; and
- normal operating conditions of the workplace; and
- relevant Australian Standards and statutory requirements.

DEFINITIONS

Excessive Noise: is a level of noise above:

- a an eight hour equivalent continuous A-weighted sound pressure level of 85 dB(A), referenced to 20 micropascals; or
- b a C-weighted sound pressure level of 140 dB(C), referenced to 20 micropascals.

Low Level Noise: Relatively low noise levels, like those in offices, typically range between LAeq.8h 40 and 75 dB(A).

Noise: Includes vibration of any frequency, whether emitted through air or another medium.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss: Hearing impairment arising from exposure to excessive noise at work. Occupational noise induced hearing loss is also commonly known as industrial deafness.

Noise Level: The A-weighted sound pressure level in decibels as read from approved sound measurement equipment.

Nuisance Noise: That which is perceived as annoying, irrespective of daily exposure. Certain types of sound, (e.g. high pitched, irregular, intermittent, or rhythmic) may be sufficiently irritating to cause headaches, interfere with work efficiency, and generate psychological distress. While the perception of annoyance is subjective, it often depends on the type of work being performed e.g the need for concentration or verbal communication). If workers or others indicate that a problem may exist then a request for an assessment can be made to the Health, Safety, Environmental and Training Unit. Remedial action will depend on the findings of the assessment.

RECORDS

All records relevant to these procedures are to be maintained in a recognised University recordkeeping system.

DOCUMENTATION

- [Hearing Test Referral Form](#)
- [Hearing Test Information and Consent for Use of Data Form](#)
- [Incident/Hazard Report Form](#)
- [Noise Code of Practice 2004](#)

REFERENCES

- Noise Code of Practice 2004, Queensland Government
- Australian Standard 1270 – 1999 Acoustics – Hearing Protectors
- Hearing Conservation Policy, University Of Queensland 5 December 2002
- Noise Management Plan Edith Cowan University July 1999
- Workers’ Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003

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