# Noise

# Procedure (29)

Catholic Safety & Injury Management

South Australia

## Contents

## 1. PURPOSE

To provide guidance on the requirements for the prevention and management of exposure to hazardous noise that is likely to cause hearing damage.

## 2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all workers under the Catholic Church Endowment Society Inc. (CCES).

## 3. DEFINITIONS

Definitions can be found on the Catholic Safety & Injury Management Website.

### 3.1. Information

Hazardous noise affects the functioning of the inner ear, which may cause temporary hearing loss. After a period of time away from noise, hearing may be restored. With further exposure to hazardous noise, the ear will gradually lose its ability to recover and the hearing loss will become permanent.

The acceptable noise exposure standard in the workplace is 85 dB(A) averaged over an eight-hour period. This is not to imply that a safe condition exists at or below 85 dB(A). It simply means that an eight-hour exposure of 85 dB(A) is considered to represent an acceptable level of risk to hearing health in the workplace.

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Specific responsibilities for carrying out certain actions required by the CCES, have been allocated to particular position holders within the organisation. Such responsibilities are consistent with the obligations that the legislation places on officers, managers, supervisors, workers and others in the workplace.

Responsibility, authority and accountability processes have been defined in Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Procedure (12), and summarised in:

- Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Workers (025G);
- Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Managers & Supervisors (023G);
- Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Officers (024G); and
- Work Health & Safety and Injury Management Policy.

You are required to familiarise yourself with this procedure in order to understand the obligations that you may have in relation to its implementation and to carry out your assigned actions and responsibilities.

This Procedure is to be read in conjunction with your Organisational Policies and / or Procedures.

# 5. PROCEDURE

## 5.1. Noise Identification

Worksites must ensure the site is inspected to identify areas where noise hazards exist. Noise Hazard Identification Checklist (079F) can be used to assist in the identification process.

Ensure workers who may be affected by noise are consulted during the identification process.

### 5.1.1. Where noise has been identified as a hazard

A noise assessment shall be conducted by a competent person in accordance with AS / NZS 1269.1 Occupational noise management - Appendix A Competency Requirements for People Undertaking Detailed Noise Assessments (e.g. design and technology, grounds and maintenance, music).

A calibrated noise measuring instrument appropriate to the assessment shall be used. The more complex the situation, the more knowledgeable and experienced the person needs to be.

If the assessment has identified that noise is a potential hazard, a risk assessment must be conducted to identify what controls are necessary to protect the hearing of the affected workers. Ensure workers who may be affected by noise are consulted during the risk assessment process.

Consider the following:

- who is exposed to hazardous noise, when and for how long;
- the systems of work and the combination of noisy work activities;
- source information and advice from suppliers of plant and equipment, industry associations, unions, technical specialists and manufacturers;
- environmental noise that may chronically interfere with concentration and communication;
- building design and layout, walls, surfaces, workstations;
- type and location of plant and equipment and how it is used;
- if existing controls are effective;
- if ototoxic substances are used (e.g. herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, solvent mixtures and fuels).

### 5.1.2. Control noise at the source if possible:

- eliminate the noise source;
- substitute for quieter plant / equipment;
- isolate plant / equipment from people;
- use engineering controls (e.g. installation of acoustically absorbent materials and / or acoustic enclosures, noise barriers, hoods, mufflers, silencers, vibration isolators and sound dampers);

- introduce administrative controls – job rotation, job design, training, education and reduce the number of workers exposed;
- ensure good design of buildings and layout for acoustic comfort;
- consider engaging an appropriately qualified engineer to determine the most cost effective solution;
- replace worn parts as required.

Workers may be protected from excessive noise exposure by means of personal hearing protection and job / duty rotation.

### 5.1.3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When selecting personal hearing protectors you should consider:

- the degree of attenuation required in the worker's environment refer to Table 1. Do not provide protectors that overprotect by cutting out too much sound – this can cause difficulties hearing verbal instructions and other sounds needed to work safely;
- the suitability for the type of working environment and the work tasks (e.g. earplugs are difficult to use hygienically for work that requires them to be inserted with dirty hands and in these circumstances, ear-muffs are more appropriate. However ear-muffs can be uncomfortable to wear in hot environments and can make it difficult for the wearer to enter a confined space or to wear a helmet);
- the comfort, weight and clamping force of the personal hearing protector.

**Table 1 - Recommended Class of hearing protector**
(source: Table 4 – Noise Code of Practice)

| Measured exposure LAeq,8h dB(A) | Class |
|---|---|
| Less than 90 | 1 |
| 90 to less than 95 | 2 |
| 95 to less than 100 | 3 |
| 100 to less than 105 | 4 |
| 105 to less than 110 | 5 |

Individual fit of personal hearing protectors is critical for optimum protection. Several devices are available to assist with this.

Wearing work equipment—such as hard hats, dust masks and eye protection—may affect the performance of the protector. The fit of hearing protectors should be checked while the user is wearing regular work equipment. Workers wearing spectacles should be fitted with hearing protectors while wearing the spectacles.

Note: Providing ear plugs or muffs that have an attenuation reduction factor providing 5 to 15 dB(A) for the user may compromise users' functionality (this can cause difficulties hearing instructions and other sounds needed to work safely e.g. hearing alarm signals).

### 5.1.4. Vibration

Studies have indicated that there is a link between exposure to hand-arm vibration and hearing loss, refer to Plant Management Procedure (15). Workers who use equipment such as chainsaws that subject the worker to both hand-arm vibrations and to noise may be more likely to suffer from hearing loss. Tools that may expose workers to both noise and hand-arm vibration include:

- pneumatic and electrical rotary tools such as concrete breakers, grinders, sanders and drills;
- percussive tools such as chippers and riveters;
- petrol-powered tools such as lawn-mowers, brush-cutters and chainsaws.

### 5.1.5. Reviewing controls

Review noise controls regularly for effectiveness and when:

- there are changes in the conditions of the workplace that could lead to noise levels exceeding the exposure standard;
- noise controls are deemed ineffective;
- a new noise hazard is identified;
- concerns are raised by workers or their representative about the level of noise associated with a piece of plant or equipment and / or other noise source;
- there are changes to legislation.

### 5.1.6. Audiometric testing (hearing tests)

Hearing tests must:

- be conducted for all workers who are frequently required to use personal hearing protectors to protect the worker from hearing loss associated with noise that exceeds the exposure standard;
- be conducted for these workers within the first three (3) months of employment and in any event, at least two (2) yearly and a copy kept in the workers personnel records;
- be performed by a competent person in accordance with AS/NZS 1269.4 – Occupational noise management – Auditory assessment.

Once completed ensure worker receives results from their individual assessment and an explanation of the meaning and implications. De-identified individual results and group data should be assessed to determine effective controls (e.g. WHS Committee meeting).

### 5.2. Records

Documents used to manage Noise as prescribed by this procedure will be produced in a format that allows tracking for verification and review and be in accordance with requirements detailed in Document Control Procedure (22).

### 5.3. Review

This procedure will be subject to a planned review by the document owner in accordance with the requirements outline in Document Control Procedure (22).

Other methods for reviewing and evaluating the performance of this procedure will include:

- audit activity;
- investigations;
- performance reports.

## 6. RELATED SYSTEM DOCUMENTS

### 6.1. Policies & Procedures

Consultation & Communication Procedure (5)

Hazard Management Procedure (14)

Personal Protective Equipment Procedure (30)

Plant Management Procedure (15)

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Procedure (12)

### 6.2. Forms & Tools

Noise Hazard Identification Checklist (079F)

Noise Process Flow Chart (047T)

## 7. REFERENCES

Legislation and other requirements related to this procedure are defined in Group Legal Register (010T) which can be accessed via the Catholic Safety & Injury Management website.

### 7.1. Internal Resources

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Managers & Supervisors (023G)

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Officers (024G)

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Workers (025G)

### 7.2. External Resources

AS / NZS 1269.1 Occupational noise management – Part 1: Measurement and assessment of noise emission and exposure

AS / NZS 1269.4 – Occupational noise management – Part 4: Auditory assessment

Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work Code of Practice

## 8. AUDITABLE OUTPUTS

The following examples of records will be used to verify implementation of this procedure:

- Noise Hazard Identification Chart
- Noise risk assessment
- Audiometric testing records
- Personnel Protective Equipment records

## 9. VERISON CONTROL & CHANGE HISTORY

| Version | Approved by | Approved Date | Reason for Development of Review | Next Review Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| V1 | Sector Forums | November 2014 | Legislation – New WHS Act | 2017 |
| **April 2015 – Document consolidated across CCES sectors** | | | | |
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