

FOCUS ON Noise

Delivery Guide

Focus On Learning Key



Read

Read through the following information



Exercise

Analyse the information in your work group



Discuss

Go through questions in your workgroup

Importance of Managing Noise Hazards

Noise is a priority health hazard in NSW mining and a focus area for health management. There is a real possibility that workers in the mining industry will suffer significant and permanent hearing loss, during the course of their work life¹.

Hearing loss can have devastating effects on an individual's ability to contribute not only in community activities, but can limit relationships and professional opportunities².

1 Can you identify with any of the following statements?

This question is to determine if and to what extent, noise might be an issue on your site. Anyone answering yes to these questions may indicate that noise is not being adequately controlled and further analysis is required. Refer to Resource C of the Industry & Investment NSW, Health Management Plan Toolkit.

Exposure

Exposure to noise is measured in decibels (dB) and the higher the decibel the higher the risk of Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL). Eliminating or reducing the noise can only be done at the source and cannot be achieved with PPE because the hazard (or source of the noise) remains unchanged. PPE is only able to reduce the effects of exposure.

¹ Driscoll, T (2007) Summary literature review of health issues related to NSW mining www.resources.nsw.gov.au/safety

² National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (1991) Control guide Management of noise at work. Canberra.



Cumulative Exposure

Repeated doses of high noise exposure can lead to a reversible hearing loss called "temporary threshold shift". With long term exposure, this temporary hearing loss can become permanent³.

Australian Standard AS1269 Occupational Noise Management can assist in determining exposure limits. Factors to consider in cumulative noise exposures are the level of exposure (dB) and the amount of exposure (time).



A Noise Map

The noise map is an exercise to identify and assess noise exposures. It can also be used as supporting documentation in a safe work method statement. This exercise allows workers the opportunity to analyse the noise hazards in their work area⁴.

2 How many people are/will be exposed to this noise source?

Determining if particular work groups are more at risk and how many people are at risk will aid in the development of strategies for implementing further controls (an example: is their opportunity to allow access to the noise affected area to certain people) or monitoring⁵.

3 We reduce our risk by?

Are we using the highest levels of risk management controls?

^{3,4 & 5} Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (2007) *Principles of occupational health and hygiene*, C.Tillman, Allen & Unwin, Australia

Noise



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4 🗨️ How would you rate the effectiveness of your controls?

Evaluation is an important part of the risk management process. Thinking up controls and implementing controls is not enough, we need to know if the controls are working and how well they work⁶.

B 📄✍️ Identify a noise source that has been rated as high risk.

This exercise aims to stimulate ideas for controlling noise risk and differentiating between preventative and protective controls. This exercise also aims to reinforce preventative controls as the better option of control.

Give an example of how you might protect yourself from exposure to the identified noise source.

Example: Prevent people from entering vicinity of operating equipment if practicable

Give an example of how you can prevent exposure to the identified noise source.

Example: Turning equipment off if practicable.

5 🗨️ When was the last time you had your hearing protection fitted or received training on how to fit hearing protection?

Just issuing hearing protection to workers and enforcing the use of hearing protection is not enough. Hearing protection must be test fitted and training in the correct use of the hearing protection must be conducted to ensure that the individual is getting protected⁷.

⁶ Standards Australia (2001) AS4801 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems, Sydney

⁷ Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (2007) Principles of occupational health and hygiene, C. Tillman, Allen & Unwin, Australia

Acknowledgement

This Focus On has been developed in consultation with various industry stakeholders from the NSW mining industry and endorsed by the NSW Mining and Extractives Industry Health Management Advisory Committee (HMAC). HMAC reports to the NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council and has membership from the NSW Minerals Council, Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia; CFMEU, AWU, Coal Services, WorkCover NSW, NSW Trade & Investment and an independent health expert.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Trade & Investment or the user's independent adviser.

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6 🗨️ The classification of my hearing protection is?

It is important that users of hearing protection understand the capabilities of what the protection is able to do. Users should use the right hearing protection for the right environment⁸.

7 🗨️ Do you use your hearing protection at the appropriate time?

Are workers wearing their protection?

8 🗨️ If your response was any response other than 'always', what is the reason you don't use hearing protection at appropriate times?

If not, why not?

Is the protection not comfortable to use, is it damaged and in need of replacement or are there more complex issues such as not being able to hear conversation?

C 📄✍️ From the risk you identified in exercise A, re-assess your noise risk, this time factoring in your controls?

Re-assessing the risk with controls in place will indicate if controls have bought the risk to an acceptable level or will determine if further controls are necessary⁹.

⁸ Standards Australia, AS/NZS 1269 Occupational Noise Management Parts 0-4 Standards Australia, Sydney

⁹ National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (2004) Noise management and protection of hearing at work, National Code of Practice, 3rd Edition, Canberra.