

Noise Exposure Limit Value & Exposure Action Values

As a guide: If it is necessary to raise your voice in order to have a conversation with someone near you, then you probably have a noise problem in your workplace

Noise is measured in decibels (dB). The legislation uses an exposure limit value and exposure action values expressed in dB (A) which is most people's natural level of hearing.

Ireland's Noise Exposure Values (based on an 8hr working day)		
	Exposure Values	Action Required
Lower exposure action value	80 dB(A)	If this level of exposure is reached or exceeded a detailed noise risk assessment must be completed
Upper exposure action value	85 dB(A)	If this level is exceeded organisation and/or technical measures must be put in place
Exposure limit value	87 dB(A)	This noise level must not be exceeded. Immediate action must be taken to reduce noise levels

Scenario	dB(A) Values	Action!
Whisper	20	n/a
Quiet office	40 - 45	n/a
Conversation	50 - 70	n/a
Hair dryer Office equipment Loud radio	70 - 80	Noise risk assessment required at 80 dB(A)
Lawn mower Computer room Busy restaurant	75 - 90	85 dB(A) Upper exposure action value
Power tools Pneumatic drill School technical workshop	90 - 100	87 dB(A) – employees must not be exposed to noise exceeding this
Chain saw Sand-blasting Disco Heavy Lorry (7m distance)	100 – 120	87 dB(A) – employees must not be exposed to noise exceeding this

*Source of information for this table: EU-OSHA report 'Noise in figures'

On a daily basis noise exposure levels are exceeded in many workplaces such as:

- Construction sites
- Manufacturing plants
- Waste disposal sites
- Classrooms
- Restaurants
- Bars/ nightclubs

The noise levels in these workplaces can cause both long-term and short-term hearing damage as well as many mental and physical illnesses, yet it continues to be overlooked as a significant hazard in many workplaces.