

Health and safety concerns with headphones

The main concerns are

- Hearing fire and other emergency alarms
- Excessive noise
- Cleanliness and hygiene with use.

The following are general guidelines on the use of headphones provided by the University.

Where are headphones used?

Headphones are used in several areas such as help desks, language labs, libraries. It is recommended that where a job/task involves computer and telephone work for 3 or more hours a day, then consideration is given to the use of Headsets.

The advantages of using a headset is that you work with your head and spine in the correct position for long-term comfort which reduces the risk of RSI,

Noise

Generally where staff are subjected to noise levels, the Noise at Work regulations apply above certain action levels, these being 85 and 90dB(A). These will also be subject to change in the next 18 months with new noise legislation being introduced. It is relatively easy to measure noise exposure from work equipment, machinery or loudspeakers. It is more complicated from headphones. In order to help areas with noise issues and risk assessment, the following should be followed.

- 1) It is recommended that if the use of headphones are required in a work related task, then an audiometry test should be carried out to determine existing problems with hearing at the pre-employment stage. If anyone feels that they are experiencing problems with their hearing, please contact their line manager or Area Safety Co-ordinator so that they can be referred to Occupational Health.
- 2) Staff should keep their own personal headset in a safe and secure place.
- 3) All Users should be encouraged to read instructions on correct use and positioning.
- 4) All Users should be encouraged to make full use of the volume control and to remember to turn the volume control after use.
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