

Safety and health alert

9/2008 Personal music players in the workplace

Incident

With the availability of personal technology, a growing number of workers are now listening at work to music on personal music players (e.g. MP3s, mobile phones with music capacity). The use of these devices may not be suitable for workers who operate or work with machinery because of an increased risk of injury and noise-induced hearing loss.

Factors to consider

- Personal music players can be distracting and lead to failure to pay attention
- In certain circumstances these devices may fully isolate the wearer from external noises, some of which may be needed to be heard by the worker to work safely
- Potential for noise-induced hearing loss. Sound outputs of new-generation devices can be 90 to 120 decibels on maximum setting, giving a range of 2.5 hours to only 9 seconds before the exposure standard for noise is exceeded

Recommendations

1. Employers and people in control of workplaces should act in accordance with their legal obligations to identify, assess and control hazards in the workplace.
2. Where personal music players are being used, employers or people in control should carry out risk assessments in consultation with the workers involved
3. Employers should have clear policies so that workers understand what the risks are and what is the safe system of work
4. Employees are reminded that they are responsible for their own safety and health at work and should consider if the use of a personal music player is appropriate while working

Further Information

Refer to Regulation 3.1 Identification of hazards and assessing risks and Regulation 3.46 Avoidance of noise above exposure standard of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

Commission for Occupational Safety and Health Code of Practice Managing Noise at Workplaces

Further information can be obtained from WorkSafe's internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email safety@docep.wa.gov.au

December 2008

A809596

