



uvex

The dramatic effect
of the one risk you
can't see

**The reclassification of hearing protection under PPE
Regulation (EU) 2016/425 and what it means for you**

protecting people

The World Health Organisation states...


'Noise induced hearing loss is the most common, permanent and irreversible injury in the world and tinnitus is the third most serious non-fatal medical condition'

It's time to get serious about **Acoustic Trauma**

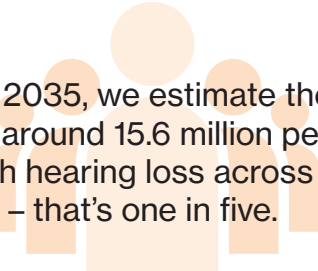
The facts:




There are 11 million people with hearing loss in the UK, that's around one in six of us.




More than 40% of people over 50 years old have hearing loss, rising to 71% of people over the age of 70.



By 2035, we estimate there'll be around 15.6 million people with hearing loss across the UK – that's one in five.



Around one in 10 UK adults have tinnitus.



An estimated 900,000 people in the UK have severe or profound hearing loss.



The risk of noise-induced hearing loss can be significantly reduced through the proper selection and use of hearing protection.



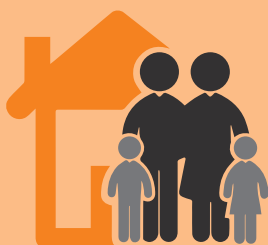
In the workplace, excess noise is one of the most universal hazards, causing irreversible hearing loss, yet it's a hazard that can be underestimated by both employers and employees.

Contrary to popular belief, **hearing loss is not inevitable**. It can be prevented by identifying the exposure levels, reducing the risk of harmful noise at source, or by wearing adequate and suitable hearing protection which has been backed up by support and training in the correct fitting and wearing.

The wider implications of hearing loss

The consequences of hearing loss have a relatively low profile that needs elevation as they have wider implications to the individual, their quality of life and the impact it can have on their family.

Socio



- Impact on family life
- Impact on life quality and lifestyle
- Risk of alienation
- Speech deterioration

Economic



- Potential loss of income
- Reduced productivity
- Cost to the employer in individual hearing aids

Risks



- Failure to hear alarms = danger
- Failure to hear instructions = frustration

Hearing loss can be seen as an inevitability and as a result is not taken seriously enough, but what makes this workplace risk uniquely dangerous?

1 It's invisible and therefore, not always given the attention it deserves



2 We adjust to noise, even excessive noise, which becomes the new norm



3 Because hearing loss is progressive, it is harder to recognise



4 It's not widely known that hearing loss is irreversible

5 Hearing loss doesn't hurt

6 It's part of the aging process isn't it?



What is the change?

On 21st April 2016 the transition period for the new PPE Regulation (EU) 2016/425 came into force resulting in the old Directive being revoked on 21st April 2018.

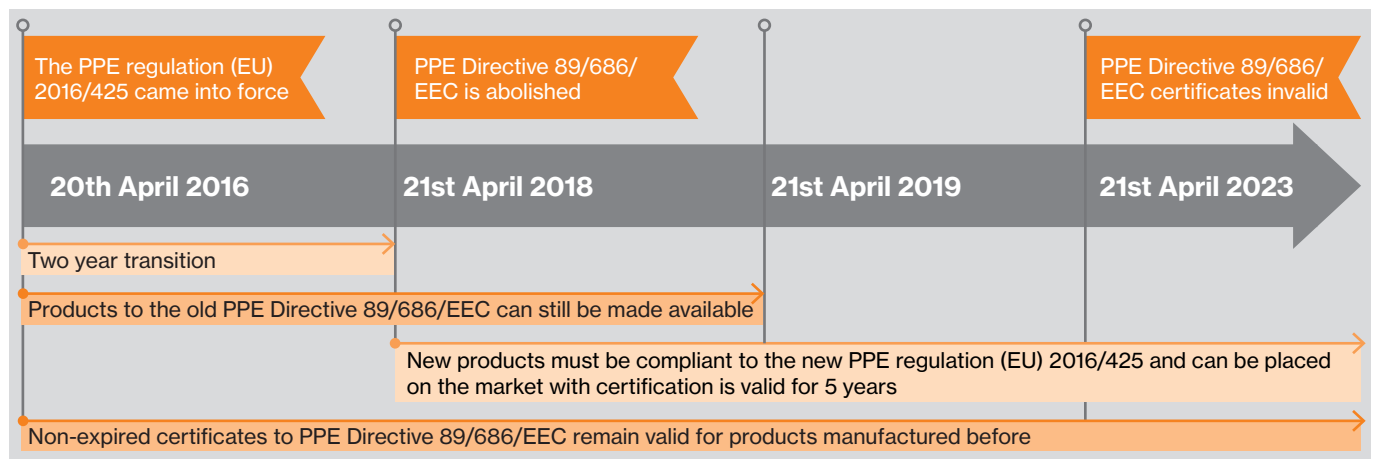
The new PPE Regulation (EU) 2016/425 is a binding legislative Act which is applied automatically to the whole of the EU, whereas a Directive sets out an objective for EU countries to achieve by a given date and needs to be transposed into each member states national law.

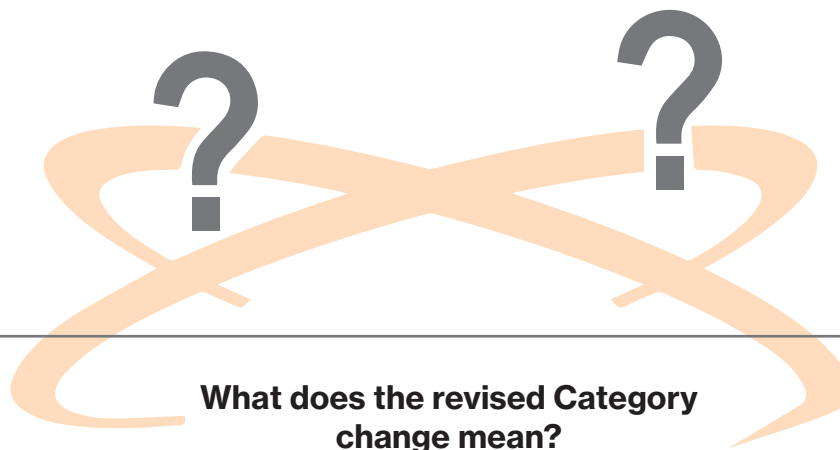
The EU's new PPE Regulation identifies workplace noise as a significant health risk, prompting a category change for hearing protection. There are much wider consequences of hearing loss which are currently not being adequately discussed and have wider implications to the individual, their quality of life and the impact noise induced hearing loss can have on them and their family.

The reclassification of hearing protection from Category II (Intermediate) to the more stringent Category III (Complex) means that hearing protection must now be treated as seriously as protection from asbestos, ionising radiation, electric shocks, falls from height, bullets and knives, and drowning. Category III applies to risks that cause very serious consequences such as death or irreversible damage to health and escalates the severity or impact of the consequences of the risk.

PPE Category	Category Description	Activity	Above-the-neck PPE Product Examples
Category I	Simple PPE (PPE designed to protect users against minimal risks)	Placing product on the market - manufacturers self-declaration	Sweatbands Cold Weather Hood System Sun Capes
Category II	Intermediate PPE (PPE not covered within category I or II)	Initial product approval	Safety Spectacles Industrial Helmets Bump Caps
Category III	Complex PPE (PPE falling under this category includes exclusively the risks that may cause very serious consequences such as death or irreversible damage to health)	On-going surveillance through testing or factory auditing	Respiratory PPE Industrial Helmets claiming Molten Metal and Electrical Resistance (EU) 2016/425 PPE Regulation change Hearing Protection

From 21st April 2019 Regulation (EU) 2016/425 is fully applicable as the sole regulation covering the design, manufacture and supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the European Union.





What does the revised Category change mean?

Products classed as Category II must be submitted for testing to gain CE approval but do not need to be retested. Products in Category III must also go through this initial test and then continue to meet the requirements of the standard through ongoing surveillance testing.

This requires samples to be submitted for testing annually, unless manufactured under ISO 9001 or other accredited quality management system. Products must also continue to meet the requirements of the latest version of the standards.

What does the revised Category change mean to an employer?

The category change for hearing protection immediately places more emphasis on the employer to correctly identify and assess the noise levels that employees are exposed to and, should the noise exposure prove to be excessive to the Control of Noise at Work regulations exposure limits, must act upon it accordingly.

Clearly, the most effective method of protecting the employee's hearing is to reduce the noise level at source. If engineering controls do not bring the noise levels down sufficiently, then hearing protectors need to be considered.

With the increased importance that hearing protection has, there is a greater significance that the hearing protectors provided must be adequate for the specific noise levels and suitable for the wearer, task and environment.

It is crucial that hearing protectors are fitted correctly and worn when needed, otherwise we almost might as well not bother. This is where the importance of proper information, education and training is vital for wearers.

What are the benefits of reclassification to Category III?

The biggest benefit of the reclassification is the elevated profile of hearing protection and therefore, hearing loss, resulting in better protected wearers. It will also further help to improve the safety of the products on the market, eliminating counterfeit or poor-quality products by ensuring that all PPE brought into the European market conforms to the new Regulation and is therefore, to a relevant and current standard.

For a complete guide to the new PPE Regulation (EU) 2016/425 visit: <https://www.bsigroup.com/Documents/BSI-PPE-Whitepaper-UK-EN.pdf>





What are the employer's responsibilities – legal duties?



The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 came into force on 6 April 2006, bringing significant changes to the actions which were required by employers and employees under the previous Noise at Work Regulations 1989. Employers had extra responsibilities, and noise exposures and level limits were lowered. The Regulations cover virtually all workplaces, from construction sites to call centres and motorcycle couriers.

What does the law require employers to do?

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 requires employers to prevent or reduce risks to health and safety from exposure to noise at work. Therefore, employers must:

- **Assess** the noise in the workplace and any risk it poses to employees
- **Take action** to eliminate the noise at source. Where this is not reasonably practicable, reduce to as low as is reasonably practicable.
- If, after noise reduction measures have been taken, one of the Exposure Action Values is exceeded then the **relevant actions** concerning protecting employee's hearing must be actioned.
- The provision of hearing protection is a last resort. Hearing protection zones must be marked and employees must be **trained in the correct fitting and wearing** of the protection.
- Carry out **health surveillance** where there is a risk to health

What is noise exposure? What are the Action Values?

Daily personal noise exposure ($L_{EP,d}$) is a measure of the total noise received by an employee over the working day. Daily personal noise exposures depend both on noise levels experienced at work and on the time spent in the noise. A high-level noise for a short time will give the same noise exposure as a lower level noise for a longer time, if the total sound energies of the two noises are the same.

Weekly personal noise exposure ($L_{EP,w}$) is a measure of the total noise received by an employee during a working week, this is used where the exposure of an employee to noise varies markedly from day to day. It is calculated for a 40-hour week (five 8-hour days) instead of an 8-hour day.

Peak sound pressure level (L_{Cpeak}) is the instantaneous C-weighted peak sound pressure level occurring during the working day, i.e. impact or explosive noises.

Lower exposure action values are 80 dB(A) $L_{EP,d}$ Sound Exposure, and 135 dB(C) L_{Cpeak} Peak Level.

Upper exposure action values are 85 dB(A) $L_{EP,d}$ Sound Exposure, and 137 dB(C) L_{Cpeak} Peak Level.

The exposure action values are ambient noise levels and do not take into account any hearing protection.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and the Noise Directive 2003/10/EC provides provide more detail than given above, and the HSE has published detailed guidance on the regulations.

uvex Technical Support Services

uvex offers effective training packages which highlight the health benefits of protecting employees from hearing loss. Following a noise assessment, our professionals are available to guide you through the process of selecting the right hearing protection based on noise exposure levels and delivering training to ensure correct fitting for maximum protection and comfort.

We can provide the following:



1



uvex can assist with a 'noise check' to identify tasks, environments and/or employees who might be exposed to potentially harmful levels of noise.

2



We will discuss the results and help identify if something needs to be done, for example, if a more detailed noise assessment needs to be carried out. This will help determine the actual noise exposure levels, those employees specifically at risk, the sources of any noise, as well as providing advice on possible engineering controls to reduce the noise levels at source and the establishment of any hearing protection zones.

3



Assuming hearing protection is required, uvex can advise on the correct level of protection and offer suitable products for the wearer, the activity and the working environment.

4



uvex will assist in conducting wearer trials on the selected product(s), combined with information on the correct product fitting.

5



Once suitable products are trialed and confirmed, uvex offer a complete noise conservation programme. From the introduction of the products to correct wearing, together with a wide range of information on the importance of protecting our hearing.



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