

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Cafe and restaurant industry – Noise

It is common for cafe and restaurant employees to have impaired hearing from exposure to noise. Noise is a hazard which can permanently damage hearing and affect health in other ways, such as increasing blood pressure, heart rate and causing stress. Noise can affect workers' morale and concentration and lead to increased accidents.

You must take steps to prevent your workers being exposed to excessive noise. Noise levels at an unprotected ear *above* Leq(8h) 85 dB(A) or 140 dB(C) Peak are excessive. A good indicator of a possible noise problem is if you have to raise your voice to be heard when you are talking to someone at about one metre away. If you think there is a noise problem, you may need to get someone to measure the noise levels.

Sources of noise in cafes and restaurants

- Gas stoves, coffee grinders and other mechanical equipment.
- Chopping or cutting meat or bones.
- Noise caused by poor design of ventilation systems such as exhaust cabinets, especially if they are not properly maintained.
- Clashing of utensils or metal hitting metal.
- Glass being dumped in metal waste bins.
- Amplified music systems and patrons talking loudly - this may be worse if the

- café or restaurant is designed with straight walls made of hard material with few sound absorbing materials.

Possible solutions

Try to reduce noise

- Use quieter kitchen appliances. Enclose noisy machines and have working procedures to reduce their impact on the entire working environment.
- Properly maintain machines and ventilation equipment.
- Sound absorptive materials can be incorporated into interior walls and ceilings to reduce sound reverberation (where this does not conflict with health regulations).

Protect workers

- If the noise level cannot be reduced to a safe level, use job rotation to reduce the length of time of exposure to noise.
- Workers should wear hearing protectors. Ear plugs are available in bright colours with some glow-in-the-dark models being available. Workers should be taught how to use the hearing protection properly.

For more information on noise and other workplace health and safety issues call 1300 369 915 or visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

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Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Information guide: Café and restaurant industry series - Noise
PN10201 Version 2. Last updated February 2010.