

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Smash repair industry (including spray painters) – Noise and vibration

Noise and vibration are closely related but cause different health problems and injuries. Noise is very common to most work areas in smash repairs. Vibration can be either to the whole body (rarely a problem in this industry) or to the hand/arm (the most likely vibration problem for panel beaters).

There are many things that can be done to reduce noise and vibration at work.

Look around the workplace to find things that vibrate or cause noise. Common things include:

- electric and air tools
- hammering (including chipping hammers)
- buffing/polishing
- grinding
- welding
- cutting
- air compressors
- radios

To reduce noise:

- relocate the air compressor to outside the work area (somewhere that it is unlikely to lead to noise complaints from neighbours) or use a sound enclosure/barrier (ensure there is enough ventilation to avoid overheating)
- repair (or fit) rubber mounts on fans and ducting in the spray painting booth
- use bending techniques instead of hammering where possible
- set up different areas in the workplace and separate with walls or (mobile) noise barriers to reduce noise affecting areas
- provide a quiet rest area for food and rest breaks

- use hearing protection such as ear muffs or ear plugs.

If hearing protection is the selected method used to protect people against noise, it must be used and is up to the employer to enforce its use. When hearing protection is used, workers must be trained in how to use and maintain the hearing protection.

It is good practice to monitor the hearing of workers by having an 'audiometric testing program' done by a suitably qualified health professional. If a worker develops a hearing problem, early detection can help prevent the hearing loss from worsening by putting in control measures that reduce noise or how much noise people are exposed to.

Where vibration from a hand tool is involved:

- use tools that have been designed so they don't vibrate or have less vibration
- adjust the speed of electric and air tools to decrease vibration
- keep tools well maintained
- choose tools fitted with internal damping where possible
- use external damping where possible (rubber coated handles/provide anti-vibration gloves)
- incorporate short breaks (e.g. 10 minutes) after every hour of vibrating tool use. These breaks can be used to do some other work which does not involve vibration exposure
- keep hands warm and dry when using vibration tools

- quitting smoking is strongly recommended for people who regularly use vibrating tools, as it helps to reduce the narrowing of blood vessels in the hands and thus the effects of vibration exposure.

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

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