July 2026
IN TOUCH
EHS Newsletter

SAFETECH
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In South Africa, noise and vibration remain two of the most common, yet often overlooked, occupational health hazards. Recognising the serious risks they pose, the Minister of Employment and Labour promulgated the Physical Agents Regulations and the Noise Exposure Regulations. The Noise Exposure Regulations are currently in effect, while the Physical Agents Regulations are set to take effect in September 2026. Organisations should ensure they understand and comply with both sets of regulations to maintain a safe and legally compliant workplace.

Across industries, ongoing exposure to excessive noise and vibration can have serious consequences, including permanent hearing loss, musculoskeletal disorders, as well as other long-term health conditions. These updated regulations reinforce the importance of identifying, assessing and controlling these workplace hazards to safeguard employee health and wellbeing.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The new regulations unify and modernise requirements that were previously fragmented across older legislation. Key updates include:

- Formal recognition of noise and vibration as physical agents that must be proactively identified, assessed, monitored and controlled in the workplace.
- Stronger focus on documented, continuous risk management. Employers are now required to carry out formal risk assessments at least every two years, with assessments conducted by competent persons. Where employee exposure meets or exceeds prescribed action levels or occupational exposure limits, employers must implement comprehensive exposure monitoring programmes, together with appropriate medical screening and ongoing health surveillance.
- The recognition of "vulnerable employees" who may face a greater risk of harm because of pre-existing medical conditions, the nature of their work, or due to simultaneous exposure to other hazards. This highlights the need for a more tailored approach to occupational health, ensuring that risk management measures take individual circumstances into account rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach to compliance.

MONITORING AND MAINTAINING HEALTH & SAFETY COMPLIANCE

Workplace hazards rarely occur in isolation - combined exposure to noise, vibration and ototoxic (ear-damaging) chemicals can significantly increase the risk of adverse health outcomes. As a result, employers are expected to assess workplace exposures holistically, taking into account the cumulative impact of multiple hazards rather than evaluating each risk independently.

Both the Physical Agents Regulations and the Noise Exposure Regulations reinforce the hierarchy of controls as the foundation of effective protection.

Noise and vibration levels must be monitored at prescribed intervals to ensure measurements accurately reflect workplace exposure, while medical screening—including audiometry where required—must be conducted by competent practitioners.

Employers are also required to provide annual refresher training so that employees remain informed about workplace hazards, control measures and their role in protecting their own health.

Records relating to risk assessments, exposure monitoring and medical surveillance must be retained for up to 40 years, reflecting the long-term nature of occupational health risks and employer accountability.

https://sheqmanagement.com/new-noise-regulations-what-do-they-mean/

www.safetech.co.za

Southern Office

PO Box 27607
Greenacres
Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth)
6057

Tel: +27 (0)41 365 6846
info@safetech.co.za

Northern Office

PO Box 80171
Doornpoort
Pretoria
0017

Tel: +27 (0)82 4111 571
sonja.pedro@safetech.co.za

Department of Employment and Labour Approved Inspection Authority (OH0049-CI-09)

OHAIA association
OHAIA-A 005 (2026)

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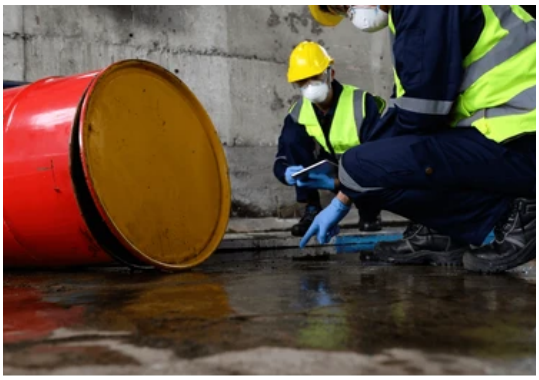
SPILL PALLETS

Where hazardous liquids such as oils, chemicals and fuels are stored or handled, the risk of leaks and spills is ever-present. Even a minor spill can result in significant operational, financial and environmental consequences if not properly contained. Spill pallets provide a simple yet highly effective secondary containment solution, helping to prevent environmental contamination, providing protection and minimising disruption of operations.

Spills also pose significant safety risks, creating slip hazards and exposing employees to potentially harmful substances. More serious incidents can lead to environmental contamination, regulatory penalties and lasting damage to a company's reputation.

Spill pallets are designed to act as a secondary containment system. Drums or containers are placed directly onto the pallet, which features a built-in sump. If a container leaks or fails, the liquid is captured within the sump instead of spreading across the floor. This simple but effective design ensures that hazardous liquids are contained at the source, making the clean-up quicker and far more manageable. It also reduces the likelihood of workplace accidents and allows operations to continue with minimal disruption.



South African legislation places clear responsibility on businesses to prevent environmental harm and maintain safe working conditions. Regulations such as the National Environmental Management Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act require companies to take reasonable steps to contain hazardous substances.

A widely accepted standard for secondary containment is that the system must be able to hold at least 110% of the largest container or 25% of the total stored volume, whichever is greater.

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A SPILL PALLET:

Capacity and Compliance
Choose a spill pallet that accommodates your storage requirements, whether for two drums, multiple drums or an IBC (intermediate bulk containers). The pallet's sump capacity must also comply with applicable containment regulations.

Material Compatibility
Ensure the spill pallet is suitable for the liquids being stored. Polyethylene pallets are ideal for corrosive substances such as acids and chemicals, but it is essential to check the chemical compatibility chart and relevant Safety Data Sheet (SDS) before making a selection.

Handling and Operational Efficiency
Spill pallets with integrated forklift pockets are best for drums that are moved frequently. They make transportation safer and more efficient without compromising containment.

Investing in spill pallets is a proactive way to manage risk - helping businesses contain spills before they become costly incidents. The result is a safer workplace, reduced downtime and lower clean-up costs.

https://sheqmanagement.com/drips-dont-have-to-drain-you/

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CONTACT US TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES FOR YOUR BUSINESS:

- Occupational Hygiene Surveys
- EHS Risk Assessments
- Ergonomics Risk Assessments
- EHS Management System Development and Implementation
- Environmental Monitoring
- Identification of EHS Legal Requirements and Compliance Audits
- Internal Auditor Training
- Specialised EHS Training

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