

The Control of Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) at Work Regulations 2016

These regulations were introduced in Great Britain in July 2016 in order to comply with EC Directive 2013/35. Similar regulations apply in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The regulations cover the minimum health and safety requirements relating to the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (electromagnetic fields).

Essentially the regulations state that Employers must ensure that all Employees are not exposed to electromagnetic field levels in excess of prescribed exposure limits. Exposure Limit Values (ELV) are limits specified in terms of internal body quantities that cannot be directly measured or simply calculated. Action levels (AL) are also referenced, which are set in terms of external field quantities that can be more easily found by measurement or calculation. These are measured in volts/metre or magnetic flux density (Tesla). Handheld meters are available on the market to measure such fields.

The key requirements for employers are to assess compliance as follows.

- ▲ Assess the levels of electromagnetic fields to which their employees may be exposed
- ▲ Make and implement an action plan to reduce exposure levels
- ▲ Assess the risks posed to employees by their exposure to electromagnetic fields
- ▲ Ensure that any risks identified in that assessment are eliminated or reduced to a minimum
- ▲ Provide information and training to employees likely to be subjected to the risks identified in that assessment, and
- ▲ Where ELV levels are exceeded, ensure that health surveillance and medical examinations are provided as appropriate.

The EU Commission have carried out lengthy studies to determine which electrical and other magnetic equipment can breach AL levels.

This can be found in the “Non-binding guide to good practice for implementing Directive 2013/35/EU”. The guide also outlines which equipment has a greater affect on employees with certain medical conditions and also those who have active or non-active implants.

Some key points regarding risk to note.

- ▲ 3-pin plug in electrical devices operating at 240V in the UK (office equipment for example) do not require assessing
- ▲ Electrical circuits where the conductors are close together and having a net or phase current of greater than 100 Amps (includes wiring, switchgear, transformers, etc.) need assessing
- ▲ Other areas that need assessing in Industry.
 - Dielectric heating/welding, Induction heating/soldering, Magnetic particle inspection, RF plasma devices
 - Electrolysis, Arc welding, Short wave diathermy, Transcranial magnetic stimulation
 - Microwave drying in construction and wood industry
 - Broadcasting systems and devices and radar devices

Currently compliance in the UK and Ireland is poor as most businesses are unaware of the regulatory requirements, we believe this is also likely the case across the EU. There is considerable scope for businesses to establish a compliant approach to the EMF regulations, via risk assessments, before the regulators commence compliance auditing. Delta-Simons supports clients with these new regulations as required.

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