

Noise measurement in the fast lane!

Due to the nature of the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) work, noise is an inevitable by-product of its daily activities. Consequently to ensure the welfare of both its staff and the community in which it operates, VOSA undertakes regular noise assessments to ensure that the relevant regulations are being adhered to, thereby protecting both the environment in which it operates as well as all staff involved in the operations.

VOSA provides a range of licensing, testing and enforcement services, with the aim of improving the roadworthiness standards of vehicles ensuring the compliance of operators and drivers with road traffic legislation, and supporting the independent Traffic Commissioners. The service carried out by VOSA forms a pivotal part in ensuring safety on the roads.

Martin Gray, Health and Safety Manager at VOSA, explains: "VOSA has over 100 test stations and approximately 60 road check sites across the length and breadth of the UK. When tests are undertaken on vehicles, noise is emitted, for example vehicles are run to allow air pressure to build for brake tests, the challenge we have is to ensure that the noise emitted is minimised and our staff are protected against excessive noise."

Martin continues: "The staff who carry out vehicle road checks are exposed to intense doses of noise, so it is vital that we carry out regular noise measurements, to help determine that the correct level of hearing protection is used."



Vehicle & Operator Services Agency

VOSA currently owns Cirrus Research's Optimus Red sound level meter. The Optimus Red can be used for all manner of applications including: occupational and industrial hygiene noise evaluations, Noise at Work surveys and noise exposure calculations, hearing protection selection using HML or octave band methods, machinery noise tests, noise ordinance and community noise assessments and general

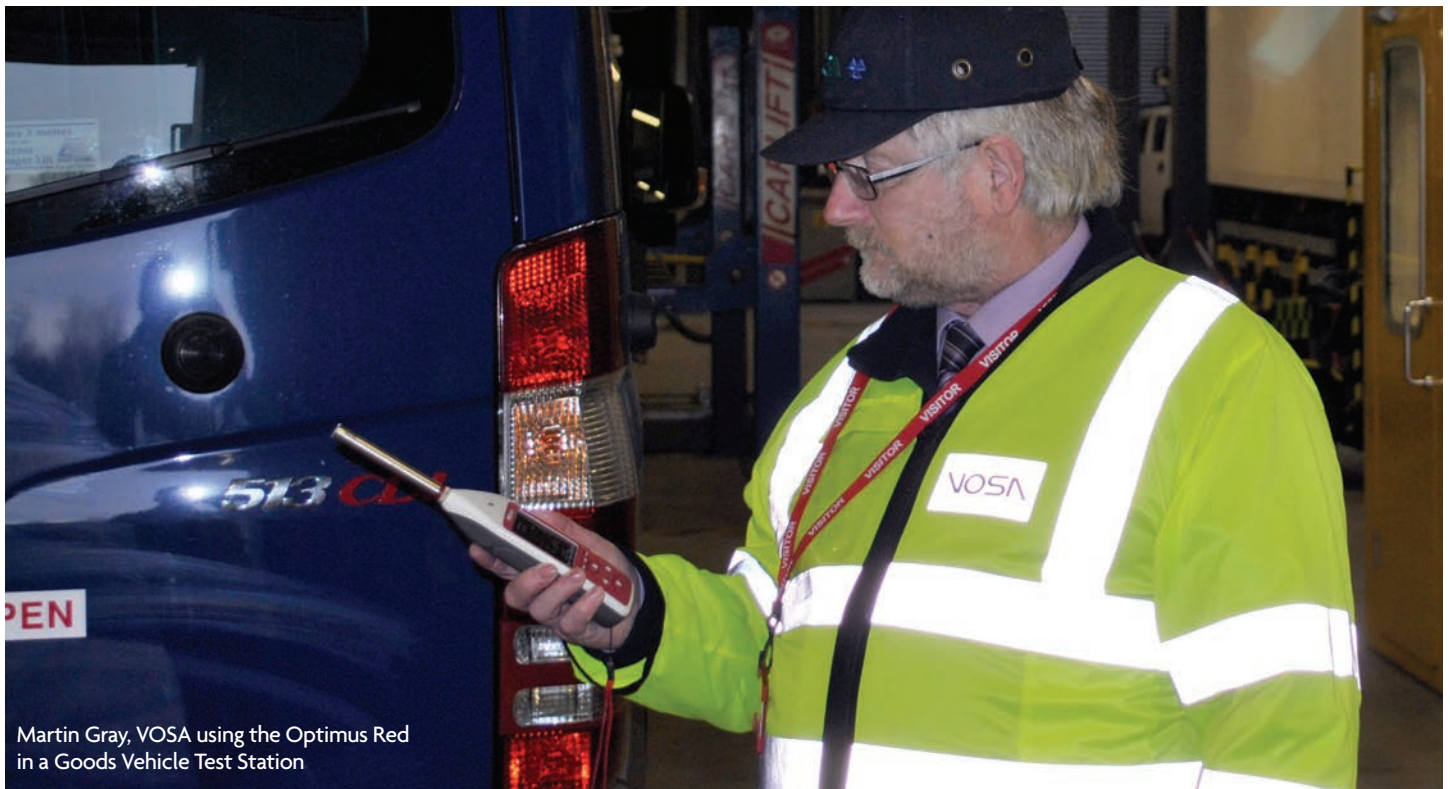
This piece of software makes the report writing process much quicker as it plots graphs for you and eliminates the need for tricky calculations...

noise measurements. VOSA also owns a Cirrus Research doseBadge Noise Dosemeter, that is the perfect instrument for implementing a personal noise measurement program.

Saving time

Martin explains: "The Optimus Red is perfect for our needs, it is simple to use and is a great time saving device. For our Health and Safety Managers, monitoring noise is just one element of their job; however they need to be able to measure the sound and advise correctly, the Optimus Red allows them to do just that. It allows the simultaneous collation of numerous noise data that can be downloaded via Cirrus Research's NoiseTools software. This piece of software makes the report writing process much quicker as it plots graphs for you and eliminates the need for tricky calculations, for example it calculates the estimated exposure levels, which makes our lives much simpler!"

The Optimus Red also boasts a high resolution colour OLED which simplifies the use of the instrument and makes viewing the noise results a lot easier. Martin comments: "When the



Martin Gray, VOSA using the Optimus Red in a Goods Vehicle Test Station

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sound level meter is used on the side of the road, the colour OLED screen makes a huge difference to the ease of the task. It allows us to explain the noise results simply – as for someone to physically see the noise measurements it makes a huge difference to their understanding. The user can simply skip through the different screens viewing the various noise measurements there and then.”

According to HSE statistics it is estimated that around 21,000 individuals who worked in 2009/2010 suffered hearing problems as a direct result of their occupation¹. Noise induced hearing loss is an area that VOSA takes seriously and works hard to minimise the impact of noise for its employees in the working environment. Martin explains: “Our test stations comprise of a large hall with anything from two to five lanes, therefore we need to keep a constant eye on the noise levels emitted. Using noise measurement instruments such as the

doseBadge and the Optimus Red allow us to measure the noise and implement the correct type of hearing protection where appropriate.”

Valuable piece of equipment

Martin concludes: “Whilst the effect of noise is a subject that is rarely considered by individuals on a day-to-day basis, noise, is a common workplace hazard that in numerous cases goes undetected until it is too late. By ensuring regular noise surveys and measurements are carried out it allows the adequate preventative methods to be put in place. Our noise measurement instruments are a valuable piece of equipment for our jobs, they allow both our staff and the community in which we operate to be protected from excessive noise!”

Cirrus Research is a leading expert in the creation and production of noise measurement instruments in the UK. Formed in 1970, Cirrus uses the latest scientific and technological developments to produce noise measurement equipment to accurately measure noise and its impact. Cirrus products are manufactured in the UK and can be used in a wide range of applications and across a variety of industries.

For further information on noise measurement instruments from Cirrus Research please visit the website www.cirrusresearch.co.uk

Cirrus Products used in this case study

- The Optimus Red Sound Level Meter
- doseBadge Noise Dosemeter
- NoiseTools software (Free with both of above)

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1 – <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/deafness/index.htm>

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