

Sound Level Limits for Personal Music Players and Mobile Phones: A New European Standard Planned for 2011

With the issuing of amendments to existing standards (EN 60065:2002 and EN 60950-1:2006) in early 2011, progress has been made on the European Commission mandate to ensure that personal listening devices for consumers would be safe. A transition period of 24 months will follow, during which the amended standards will be published as national standards.



By the end of this two year transition period, industry should have started to apply the standards newly prescribed sound level limits to their products.

Background

The EU Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) issued an Opinion on October 13, 2008 concluding that permanent hearing damage can be caused by regularly listening to personal music players at a high volume over a sustained period of time. As a result, in September 2009 CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization) accepted a mandate from the European Commission to develop standards to address this issue. The new standards were to ensure that under reasonably foreseeable conditions of use, such devices must be inherently safe and must not cause hearing damage.

CENELEC Technical Committee 108X on 'Safety of electronic equipment within the fields of Audio/video, Information Technology and Communication Technology' was tasked to execute the mandate and obtain input from a dedicated working group that would include representatives and experts from market surveillance authorities, consumer interest organisations, research institutes, certification bodies and manufacturers.

New Requirements

The working group proposed a new approach that resulted in the issuing of two amendments to already existing standards: *Safety of audio, video and similar electronic apparatus* (EN 60065:2002) and *Safety of information technology equipment* (EN 60950-1:2006). This proposal passed a formal vote by the National Standardisation Committees at the end of 2010 and the revised standards were released in early 2011.

The amended standard is based on a sound level limit of 85 dBA that is considered to be safe under all reasonable foreseeable conditions of use. However, there is the possibility for the user to choose to override this limit allowing the sound level to be increased up to a maximum of 100 dBA. In this case, the user must be provided with warnings about the risks and the warnings that need to be repeated following every 20 hour period of listening time.

Ongoing Work

CENELEC and the working group are expected to continue the mandated work of improving the safety of personal listening devices. The next step is expected to address the development of "smart" methods of providing hearing protection.

Bureau Veritas Assistance

If you have any comments and/or questions, please contact your customer service representative or email: cps.info@bureauveritas.com

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