



# OSHA Noise Reinterpretation Follow-Up

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 <h2>News Release</h2>	Connect with DOL at <a href="http://social.dol.gov/">http://social.dol.gov/</a>	
		
U.S. Department of Labor Office of Public Affairs Washington, D.C. Release Number: 11-74-NAT	For Immediate Release Jan. 19, 2011 Contact: Jason Surbey Phone: 202-693-4668 E-mail: <a href="mailto:surbey.jason@dol.gov">surbey.jason@dol.gov</a>	Diana Petterson 202-693-1898 <a href="mailto:petterson.diana@dol.gov">petterson.diana@dol.gov</a>

In the January issue of Production Machining, the PMPA section began with an article explaining the OSHA proposed reinterpretation of the definition of “feasible” in the Noise regulations. On January 19, 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor announced it was withdrawing its proposed interpretation titled “Interpretation of OSHA’s Provisions for Feasible Administrative or Engineering Controls of Occupational Noise.”

The interpretation would have changed the term “feasible administrative or engineering controls” as used in OSHA’s noise standard. The proposed interpretation was published in the Federal Register on Oct. 19, 2010.

PMPA led a host of commenters, including individuals, companies and other manufacturing associations regarding this proposal. It would have enabled any OSHA inspector to simply declare that any additional administrative control (that is, shutting down as many machines as needed to reduce noise levels) or engineering control, regardless of cost, is “feasible.”

There was no language to define feasible as to actually mean, “reduce noise to below Personal Protective Equipment Thresholds,” nor any language regarding cost effectiveness. PMPA requested additional time to assemble facts, winning an extension for comments into March 2011.

OSHA’s news release announcement acknowledged that industry concerns were a factor in the withdrawal: “However, it is clear from the concerns raised about this proposal that addressing the problem requires much more public outreach and many more resources than we had originally anticipated. We are sensitive to possible costs associated with improving worker protection and have decided to suspend work on this proposed modification while we study other approaches to abating workplace noise hazards.”

Precision machining shops need to stay vigilant in this area. Getting an up-to-date survey of shop noise levels, reviewing your shop’s hearing conservation program, retraining and assuring effective hearing protection (PPE)—and documenting these

activities—are essential to steps of your “prevent defense” to keep from being fined when the OSHA inspectors drop by.

Today the precision machined products industry faces a host of challenges. These include the jobless recovery holding back our domestic economy, the continued failure of the federal government to counter China’s manipulated currency and mercantilism, loss of work due to outsourcing by our traditional customers and increasingly draconian regulatory initiatives.

PMPA is proud to be an agent of “effective associating,” helping to advance member company interests in the face of these threats and challenges. By working in concert with our members, other manufacturing associations and others, this proposal to redefine “feasible” regarding OSHA noise rules was withdrawn. We think that that is “effective associating.”

