

Physical Agents Regulations, 2024

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1. Definitions

Key definitions include:

- "acclimatised" - physiologically adapted to particular thermal environment and work rate
- "action level" - level of physical agent requiring specified actions/counter measures
- "air velocity" - rate of air motion in a given direction (distance per unit time)
- "air temperature" - temperature determined by standard thermometer (degrees Celsius)
- "artificial light" - light generated by artificial light sources
- "artificial ventilation" - system where air circulates through room by mechanical apparatus
- "clothing adjustment value" - number added to wet-bulb globe temperature to represent clothing effects during activity
- "Chief Director: Provincial Operations" - provincial director defined in General Administrative Regulations, 2003
- "cold stress" - condition when body cannot maintain its normal core temperature
- "competent person" - person with required knowledge, training, experience and qualifications regarding physical agents
- "directional luminaire" - luminaire with light radiation confined to narrow beam
- "electromagnetic field" - static electric, static magnetic and time-varying electric and magnetic fields up to 300 GHz
- "equivalent chill temperature" - expression of wind-chill reflecting cooling power of wind on exposed flesh
- "exposure" - contact with physical agent at workplace including potential, accidental or possible exposure
- "flicker" - impression of unsteadiness of visual perception induced by light stimulus with fluctuating luminance or spectral distribution
- "glare" - vision condition caused by luminance sufficiently exceeding adaptation level

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- "hand-arm vibration" - mechanical vibration transmitted into hands and arms during work activity
- "heat stress" - total heat load to which employee may be exposed from combined effects of metabolic heat, environmental factors and clothing
- "illuminance" - amount of light falling on surface per unit area (measured in lux)
- "illumination" - application of light to scene, objects or surroundings
- "indoor air quality" - totality of indoor air attributes affecting health and wellbeing
- "luminance" - intensity of light emitted from surface per unit area in given direction
- "medical screening" - risk-based systematic medical assessment for disease/abnormality detection
- "natural ventilation" - air movement into, inside and out of building due to natural causes
- "occupational non-ionising radiation" - all radiations and fields of electromagnetic spectrum that don't normally produce ionisation in matter
- "occupational exposure limit" (OEL) - limit/value set by Minister for physical agent in workplace
- "optical radiation" - electromagnetic spectrum including infrared radiation, visible light and ultraviolet radiation
- "physical agent" - energy source potentially causing injury/disease after exposure (cold stress, heat stress, vibration, non-ionising radiation, illumination)
- "physical agent exposure monitoring" - systematic process measuring magnitude, frequency and duration of physical agent exposure
- "physical agent exposure risk assessment" - risk assessment of potential physical agent exposure
- "physical agents technical committee" - committee established under regulation 19
- "pitch, yaw and roll" - three dimensions of movement through a medium
- "relative humidity" - ratio of water vapor present in air compared to saturation quantity at specific temperature
- "specialised illumination" - additional illumination for hazardous workplaces, locations or precision tasks
- "stroboscopic effect" - change in motion perception induced by light stimulus fluctuations
- "the Act" - Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993)
- "time-weighted average" - average of representative measurements over defined time period
- "uniformity of illuminance" - ratio of minimum illuminance to area-weighted average or maximum illuminance
- "vibration" - mechanical, periodic or random oscillations about equilibrium point
- "vulnerable employee" - employee at higher risk of injury, disease or complications from physical agent exposure
- "wet-bulb globe temperature index" - combination of four main thermal components affecting heat stress: air temperature, absolute humidity, air velocity and mean radiant temperature

2. Scope of application



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(1) These Regulations apply to: (a) Any employer or self-employed person carrying out work at a workplace potentially exposing persons to a physical agent (b) A designer, manufacturer, importer or supplier of plant and machinery for workplace use

(2) Regulation 3(6) applies to self-employed persons, but regulations 3 and 8 generally do not.

(3) These Regulations don't apply in cases where the Noise Exposure Regulations apply.

3. Information, instruction and training

(1) An employer undertaking work potentially exposing employees to a physical agent must consult relevant health and safety representatives or committee and inform them of intentions to conduct: (a) Physical agent exposure risk assessment (b) Physical agent exposure monitoring (c) Training as contemplated in subregulation (4)

(2) An employer must inform relevant health and safety representatives or committee of intentions to conduct medical screening and surveillance.

(3) An employer must inform relevant health and safety representatives or committee of documented outcomes of: (a) Physical agent exposure risk assessment (b) Physical agent exposure monitoring (c) Medical screening and surveillance

(4) Every employer undertaking work potentially exposing employees to physical agents must ensure employees are comprehensively informed, instructed and trained before exposure regarding: (a) Content and scope of these Regulations (b) Potential exposure sources (c) Nature of physical agent (d) Potential health and safety risks (e) Differing exposure effects on men, women, young employees and vulnerable employees (f) Control measures (g) Necessity for compliance with control measures (h) Precautions for self-protection (i) Risk assessment, exposure monitoring, and medical surveillance necessity (j) Action level and occupational exposure limit purpose (k) Procedures for reporting, correcting and replacing defective noise control measures (l) Additional matters in regulations 4 and 8 (m) Process to access records

(5) The employer must ensure refresher training is conducted at least annually or more frequently as recommended by health and safety committee or representative.

(6) An employer or self-employed person must ensure mandataries or persons other than employees who may be affected by physical agent exposure are informed and trained per subregulation (4).

4. Duties of persons who may be exposed to physical agents

Any person exposed or potentially exposed to a physical agent must obey any lawful instruction issued by the employer or self-employed person regarding: (a) Use of adopted



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control measures (b) Immediate reporting of defective, damaged or lost physical agent control measures (c) Cooperation in determining exposure (d) Reporting potential physical agent risks (e) Reporting for medical screening and surveillance (f) Information, instruction and training

(2) An employee required to use personal protective equipment must: (a) Inspect, use, wear, store and dispose of the equipment per instructions (b) Not intentionally misuse or damage the equipment (c) Immediately inform the employer or health and safety representative of damage, defects or cleaning/replacement needs

5. Duties of designers, manufacturers, importers and suppliers

Any designer, manufacturer, importer or supplier must: (a) Ensure applicable health and safety standards are incorporated in design and manufacture (b) Ensure plant or machinery design and manufacture minimizes physical agent exposure risk when properly used (c) Supply plant or machinery that can be safely transported, received, stored and handled (d) Install plant or machinery to minimize physical agent exposure risk (e) Provide necessary information, instruction and training (f) Provide appropriate maintenance information

6. Physical agent exposure risk assessment

(1) An employer or self-employed person must conduct a documented physical agent exposure risk assessment: (a) Before exposure to a physical agent, where reasonably practicable (b) Thereafter at intervals not exceeding 24 months (c) Using a competent person

(2) The assessment must include at least: (a) Complete hazard identification (b) Identification of all persons who may be affected (c) How employees may be affected (d) Analysis and evaluation of risks (e) Prioritization of risks (f) Previous physical agent exposure risk assessments (g) Previous physical agent exposure monitoring reports

(3) The assessment must consider specific exposure effects on men, women, young employees and vulnerable employees.

(4) An employer or self-employed person must: (a) Consider recommendations identified by the competent person (b) Develop a documented action plan for recommendation implementation

(5) An employer or self-employed person must review the assessment if: (a) The assessment is no longer valid (b) Control measures are ineffective (c) Technological or scientific advances allow more effective control methods (d) There has been a change in: (i) The workplace or work methods (ii) The type of work carried out (iii) The type of plant, machinery or personal protective equipment used (e) An incident occurred (f) Medical surveillance reveals an adverse health effect where a physical agent is a contributing factor

(6) The review must be carried out in accordance with subregulations (1)(c), (2), (3) and (4).



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7. Physical agent exposure monitoring

(1) An employer or self-employed person must ensure a physical agent exposure monitoring program is implemented at workplaces where risk assessment indicates potential exposure to a physical agent: (a) At or above: (i) Occupational exposure limits in Tables 1 and 2; or (ii) Guideline values in Table 3 (b) Outside the range for guideline values in Table 3

(2) The monitoring program must be: (a) Carried out according to these Regulations (b) Conducted by a competent person (c) Representative of employee exposure (d) Conducted per recognized principles and methodology (e) Conducted with properly calibrated instruments (f) Recorded with traceable measurements

(3) The program must include quantification of exposure levels and comparison to values or limits for the particular physical agent.

(4) An employer or self-employed person must conduct monitoring: (a) At a frequency determined by the risk assessment; or (b) At least every 24 months, subject to inspector direction

(5) An employer or self-employed person must: (a) Consider recommendations identified in the monitoring report (b) Develop a documented action plan for recommendation implementation

8. Medical screening and surveillance

(1) An employer must ensure employees are placed under documented medical screening if: (a) Risk assessment indicates need (b) For vulnerable employees, when recommended by occupational medicine practitioner

(2) In cases requiring medical screening, the occupational medicine practitioner must consider if: (a) An employee has a health condition making them vulnerable to a physical agent (b) An employee has a health condition impacting proper use of personal protective equipment (c) There is an identifiable occupational disease or adverse health effect related to a physical agent (d) There is reasonable likelihood that the disease/effect may occur under particular exposure conditions (e) There are valid diagnostic techniques for the disease/effect

(3) Where screening is necessary, the occupational medicine practitioner must specify requirements including: (a) Employee medical, occupational and exposure history evaluation (b) Appropriate clinical examination and medical tests (c) Screening intervals based on health risks and employee status

(4) The employer must ensure: (a) Screening is performed by an occupational health practitioner (b) Screening includes: (i) Initial medical screening before employment, when reasonably practicable (ii) Periodic screening at intervals recommended by occupational medicine practitioner (not exceeding 24 months)



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(5) After screening, the occupational health practitioner must inform the employer in writing of normal results.

(6) The occupational medicine practitioner must notify the employer via medical certificate of fitness, and inform the employee, if: (a) The employee has a medical condition that: (i) Prevents wearing personal protective equipment (ii) Is likely to be aggravated by workplace exposures (b) Screening identifies an adverse health effect caused by physical agent exposure

(7) The employer must ensure exit medical screening upon employment termination (a screening within 6 months prior to termination fulfills this requirement).

(8) The medical certificate of fitness must indicate: (a) Recommendations on fitness to perform job requirements (b) Presence of occupational disease (without confidential medical information) (c) Any restrictions or conditions for specified duties (d) Duration of restrictions/conditions

(9) The employer must, as far as reasonably practicable: (a) Accommodate recommended conditions or restrictions (b) Permit employees certified for restricted duties to return to normal duties only when certified fit

(10) An employer must establish, implement and maintain a documented medical surveillance system, overseen by an occupational medicine practitioner, where screening has been determined necessary.

(11) Medical surveillance must at least: (a) Include screening results analysis over time (b) Use results to identify need for targeted exposure prevention

(12) The employer must ensure employees provide written informed consent for inclusion in screening and surveillance programs.

(13) An employee may appeal medical certificate findings to the Chief Inspector within 60 days of receipt.

9. Cold stress

(1) The employer or self-employed person must ensure cold stress is eliminated at the source, where reasonably practicable.

(2) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable and exposure is at or below the OEL in Table 1, the employer or self-employed person must, at minimum: (a) Implement alternative working methods to reduce exposure (b) Install plant and machinery designed to reduce risk (c) Implement maintenance programs (d) Review workplace/workstation design and layout (e) Review: (i) Risk assessment (ii) Exposure monitoring program (iii) Medical screening (iv) Medical surveillance (v) Control measures (f) Limit duration and magnitude of employee exposure per Table 8 (g) Provide appropriate protective clothing and equipment



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(3) The physical agent exposure monitoring program must: (a) Consider both dry-bulb temperature and air velocity (b) Be taken over at least 4 hours (c) Be conducted during coldest period of employee's shift (d) Be conducted during coldest quarter of the year per risk assessment

10. Heat stress

(1) The employer or self-employed person must ensure heat stress is eliminated at the source, where reasonably practicable.

(2) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable and exposure is at or above the action level in Table 1, the employer or self-employed person must, at minimum: (a) Identify why the action level was reached (b) Review control measures to prevent reaching the OEL

(3) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable and employee exposure is at or above the OEL for heat stress in Table 1, the employer or self-employed person must, at minimum: (a) Implement alternative working methods to reduce exposure (b) Install plant and machinery designed to reduce risk (c) Implement maintenance programs (d) Review workplace/workstation design and layout (e) Review: (i) Risk assessment (ii) Exposure monitoring program (iii) Medical screening (iv) Medical surveillance (v) Control measures (f) Limit duration and magnitude of exposure (g) Subject exposed employees to heat acclimatisation program (h) Provide prompt first aid treatment for heat stress effects (i) Provide sufficient potable water (k) Provide appropriate protective clothing and equipment, considering clothing adjustment value in Table 9

(3) The physical agent exposure monitoring program must be conducted according to SANS 7243.

11. Illumination

(1) An employer or self-employed person must provide illumination in the workplace as natural light, artificial light or a combination.

(2) An employer or self-employed person must ensure illumination considers: (a) Illuminance values (b) Glare (c) Uniformity of illuminance (d) Flicker (e) Stroboscopic effect

(3) An employer or self-employed person must ensure specialized illumination for: (a) Hazardous workplaces or tasks (b) Precision tasks

(4) For illumination provided, the employer or self-employed person must ensure: (a) Illuminance meets minimum maintained average values in: (i) Table 4 for interior workplaces (or Table 5 if workplace not referenced) (ii) Table 6 for exterior workplaces (or Table 7 if workplace not referenced) (b) Glare is eliminated or reduced to maintain visual performance (c) Uniformity of illuminance meets: (i) At least 0.75 for horizontal working planes (ii) At least 0.20 between average illuminance and adjacent floor areas (iii) Values in Table 6 or 7



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for exterior workplaces (d) Flicker is eliminated or reduced to maintain visual performance
(e) Stroboscopic effect is eliminated where hazardous

(5) For emergency evacuation, employers or self-employed persons must provide emergency illumination of: (a) At least 1 lux at floor level for escape routes (b) At least 5 lux at floor level for emergency escape illumination (c) At least 5 lux at floor level for emergency exits (d) At least 20 lux at floor level for workplaces requiring machinery shutdown before evacuation (e) At least 20 lux at floor level for workplaces with dangerous materials/processes

(6) Emergency illumination sources must: (a) Activate within 30 seconds for purposes in (5)(a), (b) and (c) (b) Activate within 0.5 seconds for purposes in (5)(d) and (e) (c) Last long enough for safe evacuation (d) Be mounted at least 2 meters above floor level and appropriately aimed (e) Be kept clean, in good working order and tested every 3 months

(7) Employers or self-employed persons must establish illumination measurement and monitoring programs where risk assessments indicate potential exposure to: (a) Illumination below minimum values (b) Flicker (c) Stroboscopic effect (d) Specialized illumination needs

(8) The illumination measurement and monitoring program must be: (a) Conducted at frequency determined by risk assessment or at least every 24 months (b) Conducted by a competent person (c) Conducted with calibrated instruments (d) Traceable to measurement standards (e) Conducted according to: (i) SANS 10114-1 for interior lighting (ii) SANS 10389-1 for exterior lighting (iii) SANS 10114-2 for emergency lighting

(9) The employer or self-employed person must: (a) Consider recommendations from the measurement/monitoring report (b) Develop a documented action plan for recommendation implementation

(10) To maintain adequate illumination, employers or self-employed persons must ensure: (a) Luminaires and lamps are maintained, cleaned and repaired/replaced (b) Windows and natural light sources are maintained, cleaned and repaired

(11) For building work, employers or self-employed persons shall ensure workplaces are safely illuminated where danger from lack of natural light exists.

(12) Windows must comply with SANS 10400: Part O.

12. Indoor air quality

(1) The employer or self-employed person must ensure risk of exposure to hazardous biological, chemical and physical agents impacting indoor air quality is eliminated at source, where reasonably practicable.

(2) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable, the employer or self-employed person must control indoor air quality to guidance levels in Table 3 through: (a) Natural ventilation; or (b) Artificial ventilation system



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(3) For artificial ventilation systems, the employer or self-employed person must ensure: (a) Compliance with SANS 10400: Part O for different occupancy types (b) Testing by a competent person at intervals not exceeding 24 months (c) Maintenance per manufacturer specifications or risk assessment

(4) Physical agent exposure monitoring must consider: (a) Thermal environment: (i) Air temperature (ii) Air velocity (iii) Relative humidity (b) Airborne contaminants: (i) Carbon monoxide (ii) Carbon dioxide (iii) Other hazardous chemical agents (iv) Mould (v) Other hazardous biological agents (c) Air requirements for different occupancy types

13. Vibration

(1) The employer or self-employed person must ensure hand-arm vibration or whole-body vibration is eliminated at the source, where reasonably practicable.

(2) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable and exposure is at or above the action level for hand-arm vibration or whole-body vibration in Table 1, the employer or self-employed person must, at minimum: (a) Identify why the action level was reached (b) Review control measures to prevent reaching the OEL

(3) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable and exposure is at or above the OEL for hand-arm vibration or whole-body vibration in Table 1, the employer or self-employed person must, at minimum: (a) Implement alternative working methods to reduce exposure (b) Install plant and machinery designed to produce minimal vibration (c) Implement maintenance programs (d) Review workplace/workstation design and layout (e) Review: (i) Risk assessment (ii) Exposure monitoring program (iii) Medical screening (iv) Medical surveillance (v) Control measures (f) Limit duration and magnitude of exposure (g) Provide personal protective clothing against cold and damp

(4) The physical agent exposure monitoring must: (a) For whole-body vibration, be conducted according to SANS 2631 (b) For hand-arm vibration: (i) Be conducted along the axes for pitch, yaw and roll (ii) Be a minimum of one exposure cycle, normalized to 8-hour time-weighted average (iii) For plant or machinery requiring both hands, be conducted on each hand (using higher value) (iv) Be conducted during coldest period of employee's shift (v) Be conducted during coldest quarter of the year per risk assessment

14. Occupational non-ionising radiation

(1) The employer or self-employed person must ensure occupational non-ionising radiation is eliminated at the source, where reasonably practicable.

(2) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable and exposure is at or above the OEL for the respective type of occupational non-ionising radiation in Tables 1 and 2, the employer or self-employed person must, at minimum: (a) Implement alternative working methods to reduce exposure (b) Install plant and machinery designed to produce minimal radiation (c) Implement maintenance programs (d) Review workplace/workstation design and layout (e)



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Review: (i) Risk assessment (ii) Exposure monitoring program (iii) Medical screening (iv) Medical surveillance (v) Control measures (f) Limit duration and magnitude of exposure (g) Provide appropriate personal protective equipment

(3) The physical agent exposure monitoring must consider: (a) The source of the occupational non-ionising radiation (b) The type of occupational non-ionising radiation

(4) Signage must be provided: (a) For identified radiation sources, where reasonably practicable (b) For areas with electromagnetic interference effects on biomedical devices (c) In the form specified in Annexure 1, clearly visible

15. Control of exposure to physical agents

(1) An employer or self-employed person must ensure exposure to physical agents is eliminated, where reasonably practicable.

(2) Where elimination is not reasonably practicable, an employer or self-employed person must reduce exposure to below OELs in Tables 1 and 2 by implementing hierarchy of control measures, including: (a) Engineering control measures to eliminate or reduce exposure at its source, or modify routes (b) Keeping plant and machinery in good working order (c) Administrative control measures to limit number of persons exposed and duration of exposure

(3) An employer or self-employed person must ensure employees exposed to physical agents receive information, instructions and training on inspection and correct use of control measures and reporting of failures.

16. Personal protective equipment and facilities

(1) Where exposure cannot reasonably be eliminated or controlled, the employer must provide suitable personal protective equipment free of charge.

(2) Where personal protective equipment is provided, the employer must ensure: (a) The equipment can reduce exposure to the physical agent (b) Selection considers: (i) Nature of the physical agent (ii) Type of work (iii) Physical effort required (iv) Wearing duration (v) Visibility, comfort and communication requirements (vi) Compatibility with other equipment (vii) Occupational health practitioner recommendations (c) Proper information, instructions, training and supervision (d) Equipment maintenance in good condition (e) Facilities for safe disposal of disposable equipment (f) Equipment is readily available (g) Storage facilities for equipment when not in use (h) Equipment is properly used

(3) These requirements apply to persons other than employees who may be exposed to physical agents.

17. Maintenance of control measures



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(1) Every employer or self-employed person must ensure control measures are: (a) Fully and properly used (b) Maintained in efficient state and good working order (c) In good repair and clean condition (d) Reviewed for effectiveness at intervals not exceeding 24 months

(2) Inspections and tests must be conducted by a competent person.

18. Records

(1) An employer or self-employed person must: (a) Keep records of: (i) Training (ii) Physical agent exposure risk assessment and action plan (iii) Physical agent exposure monitoring and action plan (iv) Illumination measurement, monitoring and action plan (v) Medical screening and surveillance reports (vi) Maintenance of control measures (b) Keep records for 40 years (c) Make available: (i) Records from regulations 3, 6, 7, 11 and 17 to health and safety representatives, committee or inspectors (ii) Records from regulation 8 to any person with employee's formal written consent

(2) If ceasing activities, the employer or self-employed person must inform the relevant Chief Director: Provincial Operations of: (a) Where records will be kept (b) How records will be accessed when required

19. Physical agents technical committee

(1) The Council may establish a physical agents technical committee consisting of: (a) A chairperson from Department of Employment and Labour (b) One Department representative (c) Three employer representatives (d) Three employee representatives (e) One professional body representative (f) One higher educational institution representative (g) One occupational medicine representative (h) Co-opted persons competent in physical agents matters

(2) The Council must: (a) Appoint members for determined periods (b) After affording reasonable opportunity to respond, discharge members for fair and just reasons (c) Appoint replacements for discharged members

(3) The physical agents technical committee must: (a) Advise the Council on physical agents matters, including codes, standards and training (b) Make recommendations and submit reports on matters to which these Regulations apply (c) Advise the Council on matters referred to it (d) Perform administrative functions requested by the Council (e) Conduct work according to Council instructions and rules (f) Advise the Chief Inspector regarding medical certificate of fitness appeals

20. Offences and penalties

Any person contravening regulations 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18 commits an offense punishable by fine or imprisonment up to 12 months, with additional penalties for continuous offenses.



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21. Repeal of regulations

The Environmental Regulations for Workplaces, 1987 as amended, published as Government Notice No. R. 2281 of 16 October 1987, will be repealed 18 months after the date of promulgation of the Physical Agents Regulations.

22. Short title

These regulations shall be called the Physical Agents Regulations, 2024.