

**All UNSW workplaces with Biological, Chemical or Plant hazards****HS735 Protocol – Use of audio/media devices with earphones in the workplace**

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Authorised by: HS Manager  
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Contact officer/s: Adam Janssen x52214  
Kate Noble x52911  
Martina Lavin x52914

**Related documents:****1. Purpose**

To ensure the use of audio and media devices with earphones (headphones or earplugs) does not impact on the health and safety of users and others in the workplace.

**2. Scope**

This protocol applies to all staff, students, visitors and contractors to all workplaces involving work with chemical or biological agents. Such workplaces include laboratories, workshops, and outdoor activities involving the use of mowers, powered tools and forklifts. It also includes when driving University vehicles or vessels (e.g. boats).

**3. Definitions and acronyms used****4. Protocol statement**

The use of audio/media devices with earphones is **prohibited** in any workplace where:

- a. Chemicals including all laboratory chemicals, radioactive isotopes, pharmaceuticals, cleaners, lubricants, adhesives, paints, herbicides and pesticides are stored or used;
- b. Biological organisms or agents which possess a biological risk or risk of infection, or are of Risk Group 2 or greater (according to AS/NZS2243.3:2010), are present;
- c. Genetically Modified Microorganisms of any risk level are present;
- d. Equipment or machinery with exposed or unguarded moving parts is operated;
- e. Dislodgement or entanglement with equipment, apparatus and other materials is possible;
- f. Any combination of any of the above.

The potential hazards associated with the use of such devices include: reduced situational awareness; entanglement of leads in machinery, apparatus or clothing; potential hearing impairment; electrical hazards associated with docking ports, adapters etc.; spread of infection via biological contamination of and from earphones and device; loss of containment of a genetically modified organism, chemical contamination from earphone and device; potential of reduced concentration for high risk tasks; reduced ability to hear warning devices.

The use of audio/media devices **with speakers only** (i.e. no earphones) may be permitted in any area at the discretion of the supervisor.

All 240V connected device components (e.g. docking stations, adapters etc.) must be regularly electrically tested and tagged (at a frequency in accordance with all other portable electrical equipment in the area).

**5. Roles and responsibilities**

Supervisors in the areas mentioned above to which this protocol applies are responsible for its enforcement.