

Focus on BIA's work

Berufsgenossenschaftliches Institut für Arbeitsschutz

No.: 0165 Acoustics in call centres

○ Problem

The primary task of call centre agents is talking to customers on the telephone. In order to maintain a smooth workflow and to ensure the health of the agents, many aspects must be kept in mind in both call centre planning and operation. A good acoustic environment has a substantial influence on whether or not callers are easily heard. The caller's voice is primarily received through a microphone headset, which should thus possess good acoustic properties.

The staff in call centres often work in teams, which means that other agents help their colleagues who cannot immediately answer a particular question by themselves. The teams also provide the necessary support in dealing with psychological stress resulting from angry callers. Yet the discussions among other workers or between agents and callers can also be distracting. This noise from other talk can be reduced by shielding and minimising the amount of reflected noise (e.g.: from walls and windows). However, such considerations must seek to avoid a complete isolation from other agents.

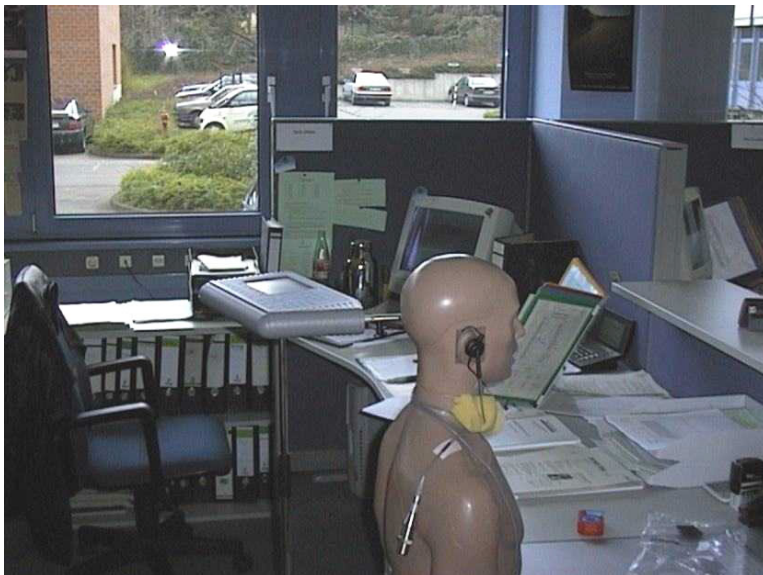


Illustration
Measuring the noise
emissions at a call centre
workplace

○ Activities

Within the framework of the project "CCall – successful and healthy work in Call Centres", led by the institution for statutory accident insurance and prevention in the administrative sector, BIA considered several key topics in the area of acoustics.

By using sample measurements in the laboratory, the acoustic properties of several headsets were analysed. The noise emissions were measured in call centres, and advice for exemplary noise reduction was provided. Finally, to determine the effectiveness of shielding (separator walls), comparative measurements were conducted in the laboratory.

○ **Results and Application**

Based on the laboratory results, suggestions were made for additional studies for having headset users evaluate the acoustic properties of the devices themselves. Further, data for estimating the effectiveness of noise shielding was made available, along with some real examples of noise reduction advising in call centres.

○ **Area of Application**

Call centres.

○ **Additional Information**

- Arbeitsumgebung und Ergonomie. CCall-Report, 4th Issue. Publisher: Verwaltungs-Berufsgenossenschaft, Hamburg 2001

- www.ccall.de

- Call-Center: Auswahl geeigneter Headsets. Aus der Arbeit des BIA, Nr. 0209

⇒ Expert assistance: BIA, Fachbereich 4: Arbeitsgestaltung – Physikalische Einwirkungen
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○ **“Focus on BIA’s work”**

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