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The Nordic voice ergonomic group: legislation and vocal health

Valdis Inigbjörg Jonsdottir
Tad er Malid, Furuvellir 13, 601 Akureyri, Iceland

Research has revealed a number of factors which have a negative impact on voice function (e.g. activity noise, background sound, poor acoustics, long duration of voice usage, speaking distance). In these circumstances vocal loading increases, potentially giving rise to voice disorders. Currently, practical measures within society for the improvement of speakers' working conditions and the prevention of voice loading are not satisfactory. Voice experts from the five Nordic countries met in Reykjavik in May 2006 to inaugurate the Nordic Voice Ergonomic Group, with the aim of investigating the current situation within voice ergonomics, with a particular focus on sound-related problems. The group found that occupational safety and health legislation relating to speech communication in educational working environment differs between Nordic countries. Moreover, this legislation does not specifically deal with speech communication or the risk of voice disorders. This presentation will report on the details of the current legislation and the Group's suggestions for legislative change which might prevent disturbance in speech communication and decrease the risk of vocal disorder as an occupational hazard.