



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)



Your Guide to

**The Noise Insulation Regulations**



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**“Every day connecting people  
safely, supporting opportunities and  
creating sustainable living places”**

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## General

### Introduction

The Noise Insulation Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 came into effect on 7 December 1995. This booklet seeks to offer guidance on the regulations but does not purport to constitute an authoritative statement of the law.

## The Regulations

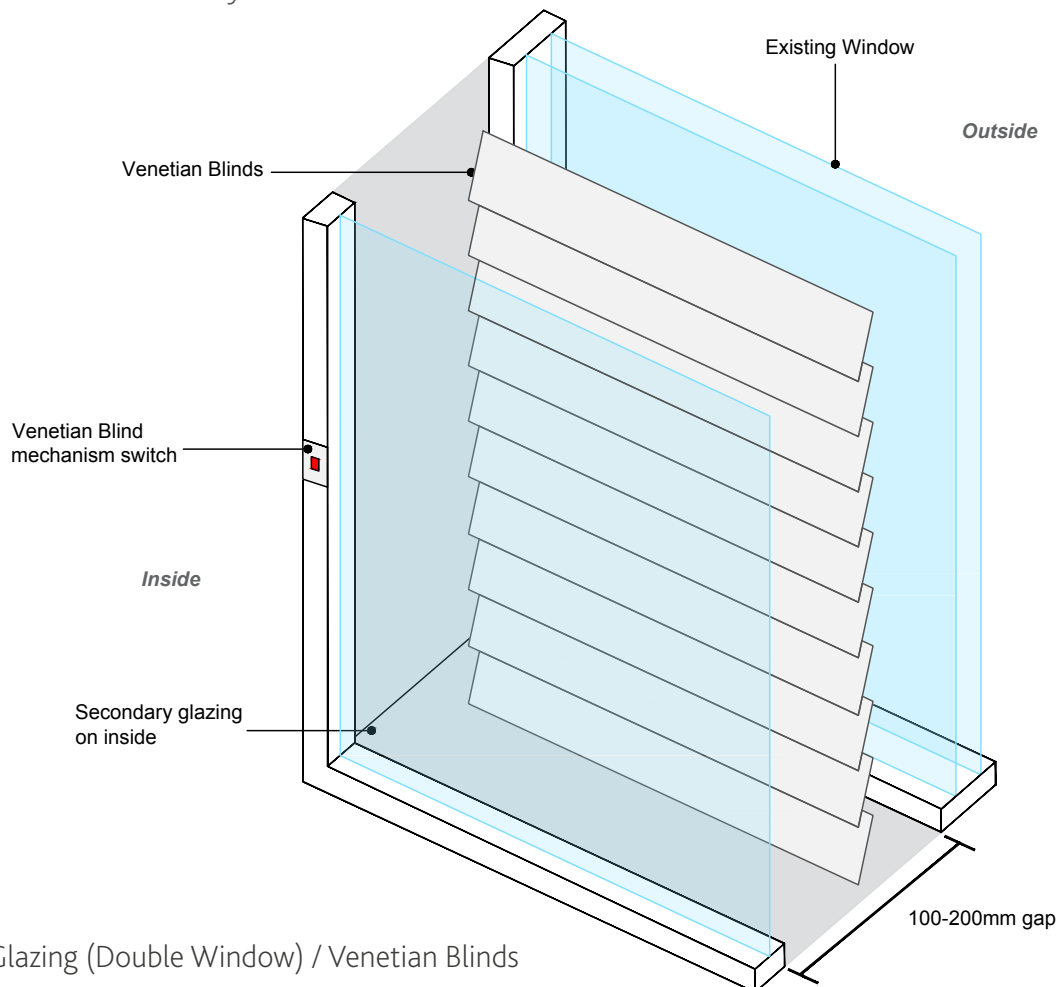
### Purpose of the Regulations

The purpose of the regulations is to offer residents subject to increased traffic noise as a result of new or amended roads, a reduction in the noise level inside their home by provision of secondary glazing, supplementary ventilation and, where appropriate, venetian blinds and double doors. Secondary glazing describes the post-construction glazed unit once a new independent window has been added internally in the window reveal behind the existing window. The newly-installed internal

window can be opened the same as any other window to allow the owner to clean the space between the two units although an independent ventilation system is also provided so that windows do not need to be opened for ventilation purposes. Secondary glazing is sometimes referred to as a double window.

A contractor working on behalf of The Department can carry out the works, though The Department may offer a grant, enabling the resident to commission the work themselves, where this is preferred by the resident. Where the offer of a grant is accepted, the work must be completed by a contractor approved by the Department to the required standard.

Depending on the type of road scheme, the Department will have either an obligation or a discretionary power to make offers of insulation or grant.



Secondary Glazing (Double Window) / Venetian Blinds



### Roads

In general, where a new road is constructed, the Department has an obligation to make offers to install noise insulation or provide a grant to qualifying dwellings. In general, where a road is altered, for instance by realignment or widening, or and additional carriageway constructed, the Department has the power to make offers without obligation. Full qualifying criteria are detailed in the schedule to the regulations.

### Eligible buildings

Eligible buildings are (with certain exceptions) dwellings and other residential properties and parts of properties such as houses, flats, retirement homes, nurses' homes and residential accommodation in educational establishments. (In the remainder of this booklet, they are all intended to be covered by the word 'dwellings'). The dwellings must be within 300m of the new or altered road and must have been occupied before it was first open to public traffic. Alterations such as extensions to dwellings which were first occupied after that time will be ineligible.

The Department has discretion to insulate dwellings which do not qualify but adjoin qualifying dwellings so that, if appropriate, the whole logical unit, such as a terrace of houses or a block of flats, may be insulated.

### Eligible rooms

Living rooms and bedrooms are eligible for treatment. 'Living room' includes, for example, a dining or breakfast room, a study or bedsitter, but not a kitchen.

For reasons of safety, a room in which a flueless combustion appliance such as a gas or solid fuel stove is installed will not normally be eligible for insulation, unless after completion of the work it will have an uninsulated window which can be opened. This is due to the restricted passage of air which results from secondary glazing.

### How do buildings qualify?

As above, dwellings must be within 300m of the scheme.

Noise predictions for the road scheme are modelled using computer noise-modelling software and compared against noise predictions in a scenario where the road is not present or altered. To qualify, the noise level must be above a certain threshold and increase the overall noise level by a certain margin. The technical detail is contained within the regulations.

### The offer of insulation

Following an assessment of the relevant noise levels, a map or list (or both) identifying eligible dwellings (or parts of dwellings) which qualify for insulation is required to be produced and published not later than 12 months after the opening of a new road. The map or list will be on public display at the office of the Department nearest to the dwellings identified and open to inspection once it has been deposited. Reassessments are completed in the fifth, tenth and fifteenth years following the date of the first assessment and the publication process is repeated.

Within 3 months of the publication of any such map or list, a formal offer has to be made to occupiers of the dwellings identified.

Prior to the offer of insulation, the Department will require access to the dwelling. A survey will be carried out and include measurements of the eligible rooms to ascertain certain measurements, including for windows, external walls, and room dimensions. Once these measurements have been taken, the Department will be able to determine the likely cost of carrying out the work.

The formal offer will normally be addressed to the occupier of the dwelling (but in certain circumstances it may be addressed to the landlord). In the case of Housing Executive properties, initial meetings with tenants will be attended by DfI (Roads) and NIHE staff.



If applicable, NIHE will subsequently notify residents of the formal offer to install insulation. Should the occupier wish to receive a grant, they should contact the Department to ascertain the grant amount. The recipient of the offer (referred to here as 'the first party') has 6 months in which to accept. However, if the dwelling is subject to a tenancy, then after the first 3 months, the other party to the tenancy (eg. The landlord in a case where the first party is a tenant) shares the right of acceptance with the first party. If the offer has not been accepted within 6 months of being made, it may be accepted during the first 12 months after the road is opened to public traffic (if that period is later). If the offer is not accepted by the first party within the initial 3 month period (during which the first party has the exclusive right to acceptance) and is subsequently accepted by the landlord, for instance, then the first party will no longer be able to accept.

Acceptance of the offer should be indicated on the form provided, may be of:

- The offer to carry out insulation in any one, some or all of the rooms listed, or
- The payment of a grant for one, some or all of the rooms listed, or
- The offer to carry out work in some rooms and the offer of a grant in respect of others

A tenant or licensee who alters a dwelling without consent of his landlord or licensor may be in breach of his tenancy agreement or licence. If either the landlord or a tenant withholds his consent, the offer may still be accepted by the other party to the tenancy and the Department or its agent has the power to carry out the work, notwithstanding that the consent of one party to the tenancy is required and has been withheld. This power, however, does not in itself give the Department or its agent the right of entry into dwellings to carry out insulation work; it merely means that the work can lawfully be carried out notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the terms of the tenancy.

### **Discretionary power**

Where the Department has discretionary power to insulate against traffic noise (paragraph 3 (ii) (a) and (b) of the Regulations refers) no map or list has to be prepared and published and the timescale for making formal offers in these cases is within 15 months from then. All other procedures are the same.

Where the Department has discretionary power to insulate against construction noise (paragraph 3 (ii)(c) refers) the procedures for the offer and acceptance of insulation are different in that:-

- No map or list has to be prepared and published. Offers of insulation are made to the occupier (or the landlord); and
- The offer must normally be accepted by the occupier or landlord within 2 months of it being made.

All other procedures are the same.

### **Appeals procedure**

As soon as offers of insulation have been made, a notice will be published in the newspapers. If you do not receive an offer of insulation, but consider that you are entitled to one, you should write to the address stated in the notice requesting an offer of insulation work or grant. Such applications must be made within 6 months from the date of publication of the notice.

Upon receipt of your application, the Department will review the noise calculation which has been made and you will receive a written statement of the conclusions of the dwellings eligibility for noise insulation.

### Arrangements for carrying out and inspecting work

If the Department or its agent is carrying out the work, whoever accepted the offer will be contacted to arrange a time when work can start.

The Department will wish to satisfy itself that the insulation works conform to the relevant specification and will request whoever accepted the offer to arrange such access for it or its agent as may reasonably be required for the purpose of inspecting the work. Any question or points on the work undertaken should be raised with the Department at the address shown on the formal offer.

### Procedure for application for a grant

When an offer is made, you will have the option of opting for a grant so that you can commission the work yourself. You are strongly advised not to commission any work prior to getting written consent, and an indication of the grant amount from the Department in order to ensure that you are reimbursed.

If you wish to make private arrangements with another contractor to have insulation work carried out and receive a grant on the cost there are some important points to remember:-

- The allowable grant is the actual cost of the work after taking into account the full value of all incentives and discounts, etc, provided by builders, contractors or suppliers, or the reasonable cost which would have been incurred by the Department in carrying out the work, whichever is less. You may ask the Department for the current figures for reasonable cost if you have not already been told. These cost limits will be related to the area of secondary glazing and doors provided, including the cost of all associated works such as lining of reveals (i.e., the space between inner and outer windows), and the making good of existing decorations, the number of rooms to be provided with ventilator systems and permanent vents including installation,

etc, and the area of venetian blinds where appropriate. If you are in doubt as to whether the price quoted by your contractor is within the limits set out in the information supplied to you, you should check with the contractor. If you decide to accept an estimate in excess of the limit, you must realise that you may have to bear the excess yourself.

- You must indicate your intention on the acceptance form and, preferably at the same time, submit an itemised quotation to show separately:-
  - (i) The name and address of your contractor which must be approved by the Department. Before the commencement of works the Department will provide you with a list of details which your contractor must provide.  
  
and
  - (ii) The total estimated cost obtained from your contractor based on works information and specification provided by the Department.
- Your application will be acknowledged and the amount of grant payable confirmed. You will not receive grant in respect of the cost of insulating rooms having windows or external doors not identified in the offer as qualifying for treatment.
- The installation must conform to the specifications set out in the schedule to the regulations and you are advised to make this clear in the arrangements you make with any contractor.
- Any contractor you employ must complete the work to the relevant specification within 12 months from the date you accept the offer of grant from the Department.
- You will be responsible for entering into any private arrangements you decide to



make. You will only be reimbursed by the Department up to the allowable cost limits and only when the work has been inspected and it conforms to the relevant specifications. You must afford the Department or its agent such access as is reasonably required for inspecting the work. If you are not the occupier, you must arrange for such access. This must be done prior to the signing off of work to allow the payment of the grant.

There are several reasons why a resident may find a grant preferable to insulation work including:

- To take the opportunity to carry out work above and beyond the scope of the Regulations, such as changing windows which would not be covered by the grant. It should be noted that the Department will not cover the entire cost where this is the case.
- Preference for a particular contractor (all contractors must be approved for use by the Department).

## Specification for insulation work

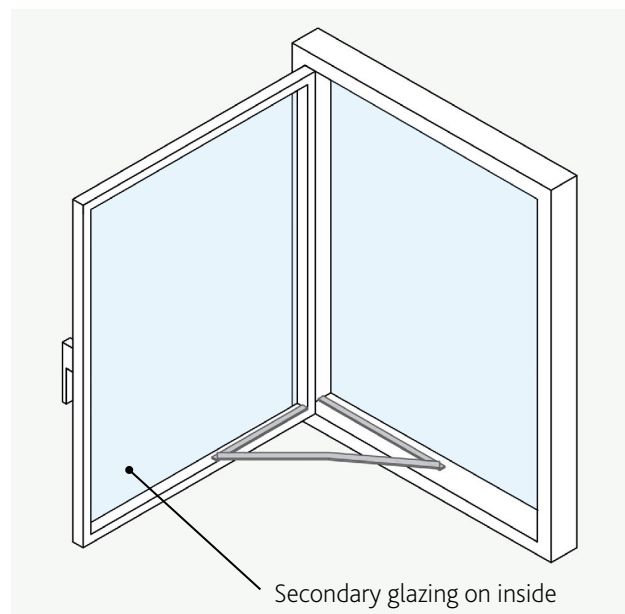
### General

The specifications offer a standard package of:-

- Double windows and double doors;
- Supplementary ventilation;
- Venetian blinds in windows facing certain directions.

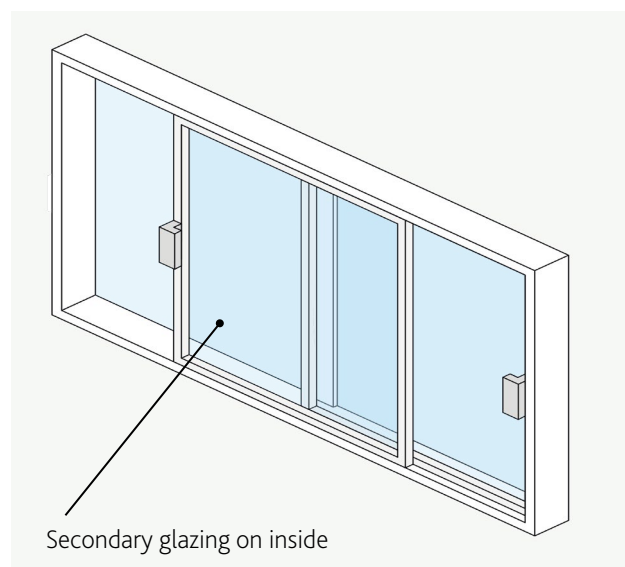
### Secondary Glazing

As described above, secondary glazing refers to the finished, post-construction glazed unit once a new independent window has been added internally (home side) in the window reveal behind the existing window. Secondary glazing is sometimes referred to as a double window.



### Secondary Glazing - Hinged Systems

Hinged casements are available as single or double leaf with the frame dimensions dependent on the window size.



### Secondary Glazing - Sliding Systems

Horizontal sliding systems comprise two or more panels running on glide-pads or rollers for larger windows, with the panels sliding within the frame.

## NOISE INSULATION REGULATIONS

Whatever the thickness of the inner glass, the wider the air gap between the panes, the greater the noise reduction. However, in some cases it may be unduly expensive to provide a wide gap because of window design. The specification is, therefore, flexible, allowing for various gaps and providing for thicker (inner) glass with narrow gaps. The specification is detailed in the schedule to the regulations.

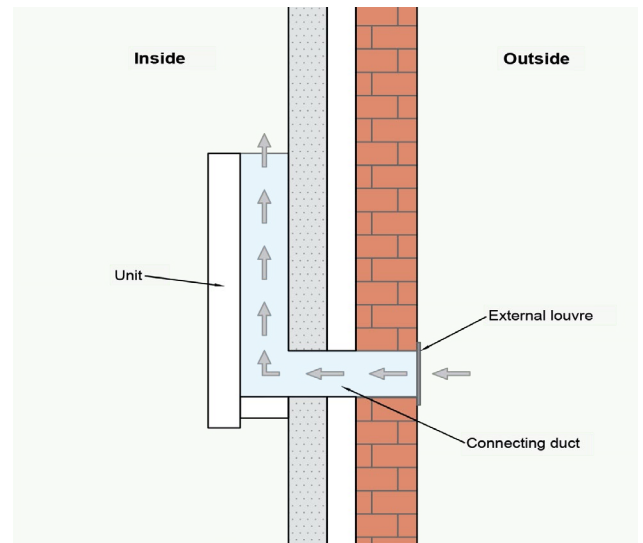
### Double doors

The same kind of considerations apply to external double doors; the air gap should be as wide as is practicable.

### Ventilation

The regulations normally require every noise insulated room to have a ventilator unit (intake fan) giving a certain specified performance. The unit must also incorporate a filter. The Department or its agent will have a list of the units with their associated air supply ducts and cowls or grilles which have been certified as meeting the specifications, so if you intend to make private arrangements you should obtain a copy of this list. Only insulation work using certified ventilator systems should be installed.

In addition to the ventilator units, each insulated room has to contain a permanent vent through which air can freely pass in or out of the room but which nevertheless restricts the passage of noise. The size and performance of the permanent vent depend on any flued combustion appliances which may be in the room; if you intend to make private arrangements, it is recommended that the Department are consulted on this subject by your contractor prior to the commissioning of works. The work to install permanent ventilation must comply with schedule 6 of the Regulations.



Typical Ventilation Section

### Venetian blinds

Although the supplementary ventilation will be sufficient for normal living conditions, when the sun is shining into rooms facing north-east through south to north-west, discomfort due to high room temperatures might result. Venetian blinds should, therefore, be installed between the panes of secondary glazing/double windows facing these directions. Schedule 5 of the regulations gives the specification for these blinds and for the control mechanisms by which they operate. You may refuse the offer of venetian blinds if you have a reasonable alternative means of solar control.

Although the supplementary ventilation will be sufficient for normal living conditions, high room temperatures (leading to discomfort from too much heat) may occur on sunny days in rooms with windows facing in certain directions, unless proper use is made of the venetian blinds and the mechanical ventilator unit is operated at a high air flow rate.





## Dwellings not of standard brick construction

Dwellings which are not of standard brick construction are included in the scheme and grants are available for the specified insulation work. If you own or reside in such a dwelling but wish to have the work carried out under private arrangement you should contact the Department and seek its advice. The Department will only insulate the appropriate windows to the specifications; it will not carry out additional work such as insulating the roof structure or pay grant towards extra work which you may undertake if you make private arrangements.

## Defects in the dwelling

The Department is not obliged to carry out work, and may not make a grant in respect of work which is required to remedy a defect in a dwelling before the insulation is installed.

## Damage during installation

The contractor will make good all damage to decoration and plasterwork around window sills, frames and ventilation units.

## Maintenance

The Department will not be responsible for the maintenance or repair of secondary glazing or doors, venetian blinds or ventilator systems installed and signed off under the regulations. Individual elements will be subject to the manufacturer's warranty.

## Work already installed

If you have already installed insulation before the formal offer is made, the Department will use its discretion as to whether an offer is made or not. If the Department chooses to make an offer of a grant, this will only be paid if your installation meets, or is improved to meet, the relevant specification and will only be paid up to the cost limits laid down.

## Operation and safe use of equipment

### Ventilators

To be at their most effective in terms of noise insulation, windows should be kept shut which will restrict natural ventilation. Fresh air is needed in buildings to reduce odours and toxic gas hazards, to prevent condensation and, on sunny days, to stop discomfort from excess heat. Although the double windows can be opened – particularly to allow cleaning – this will lead to noise ingress and so supplementary mechanical ventilation is normally necessary.

The specification of ventilators is detailed in the schedule to the regulations. It is important for the supplementary mechanical ventilation in each room to be used to supply sufficient fresh air. You should avoid blocking up the air flow through the ventilator system and permanent vents in order that the air requirements, particularly for flued combustion appliances, are met.

In a room containing flueless combustion appliances (such as oil heaters and gas cookers), a sufficient supply of fresh air must be allowed when such appliances are operating, whether by turning on the ventilator unit (the higher the rating of the combustion appliance the higher airflow setting) or by opening the uninsulated window.

### Remember

1. Do not introduce a flueless combustion appliance such as a portable oil or gas fire into a room which has been fully insulated
2. Use the ventilator unit as often as possible and especially when any permitted flueless combustion appliance is in use.
3. If you change the combustion appliance in a room which has been fully insulated, you should make sure that the appliance can operate safely.
4. Keep the ventilator unit and the permanent vent unobstructed and do not block the air flow in any way (except where closable ventilators or vents are permitted).
5. The ventilator unit has a filter – clean it regularly.

### Venetian blinds

The venetian blinds are between the outer and inner glazed units of your secondary glazing/ double window. The blinds can be tilted without having to open either window by either a pullcord or mechanism inside the room.

The blinds will prevent the rooms from becoming too hot only if they are lowered before the sun shines on the window. This may necessitate lowering the blinds before the house is left empty for the day. To be fully effective, the slats should be tilted until they are at least half closed (45°). The correct tilt provides a downward view of the ground, not an upward view of the sky.







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**In addition to this guidance, a Frequently Asked Questions leaflet is available at:**

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/article-22-land-acquisition-and-compensation-northern-ireland-order-1973-noise-noise>

**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

You agree to sharing of personal data between the Department, contractors and consultants. Refer to the Noise Insulation Regulation Privacy Notice:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/gdpr-privacy-notices-dfi-business-areas>

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**This document is available in a range of formats, please contact us at:**

The Department for Infrastructure,  
Safety, Health, Environment and Pavement  
Engineering (SHEPE),  
Clarence Court,  
10-18 Adelaide Street,  
Belfast,  
BT2 8GB.

Email: [paul.braniff@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:paul.braniff@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 028 9054 0281