**HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

**General Industry Standard 29 CFR 1910.95**

**Prepared for:**

**(INSERT YOUR agency HERE)**

Reviewed by (print name): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# OBJECTIVE

The objective of the **INSERT AGENCY’S NAME** Hearing Conservation Program is to minimize occupational hearing loss by providing hearing protection, training and annual hearing tests to all persons working in areas or with equipment that have noise levels equal to or exceeding OSHA’s Action Level of an eight-hour time-weighted average (TWA) sound limit of 85 dBA (decibels measured on the A scale of a sound level meter). A copy of this program will be maintained by all affected departments.

A copy of OSHA’s Hearing Conservation Standard, 29 CFR 1910.95, can be obtained from **INSERT YOUR information/responsIble person HERE**.

# ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Management

* Conduct noise surveys initially or when new equipment is added.
* Post signs and warnings in all high noise areas.
* Use engineering and administrative controls to limit employee exposure.
* Provide adequate hearing protection for employees.
* Conduct an annual hearing test for employees potentially exposed to noise levels above OSHA’s Action Level.
* Conduct hearing conservation training for all new employees potentially exposed to noise levels above OSHA’s Action Level.
* Conduct annual hearing conservation training for all employees.

Employees

* Use issued approved hearing protection in designated high noise areas.
* Request new hearing protection when needed.
* Exercise proper care of issued hearing protection.

# PROCEDURES

Noise Exposure Measurement

The success of the **INSERT AGENCY’S NAME** hearing conservation program depends on an accurate knowledge of the existing noise environment. Accurate surveys define areas within acceptable guidelines for noise exposure and those areas where potentially harmful noise exposure exists. Effective noise exposure measurement prevents possible loss of hearing by detecting work areas where employees must wear hearing protectors and must be tested. Therefore, the **INSERT AGENCY’S NAME** conducts detailed noise surveys using sound level meters that meet the appropriate ANSI standard and are calibrated acoustically before and after each survey. The initial area survey was performed using measurement techniques prescribed in the OSHA regulations.

Measurements are made at employees' normal working positions. This procedure allows an accurate estimation of the employees' daily exposure except in instances where an employee is required to move from one working location to another in his/her daily routine, or when an employee's instantaneous noise exposure levels vary markedly during the shift because of machine cycling. In these cases, noise dosimetry is performed. Follow-up measurements are made whenever changes in work practices or methods may change workplace noise exposures. The results of all measurements are recorded, and employees are notified of their exposure level. Noise exposure measurements have been completed and are available for review **WHERE**.

Engineering and Administrative Noise Controls

**INSERT AGENCY’S NAME** recognizes the desirability of controlling the existing noise levels by engineering and/or administrative controls. Due to the complexity of some machinery used by the **INSERT AGENCY’S NAME** and in view of economic limitations, some noise levels cannot currently be reduced to below acceptable limits.

Within the limitation of work schedules and employee skills and training background, administrative controls have been considered. Whenever feasible, over-exposed employees will be moved to other areas having noise levels below the required sound intensity levels. In addition, operational procedures are modified as necessary so that during any one 8-hour period the allowed exposure times will not be exceeded.

Engineering and administrative controls are being considered and implemented where feasible on a continuing basis.

# HEARING PROTECTION

Management, supervisors, and employees shall properly wear the prescribed hearing protection while working or traveling through any area that is designated as a high noise area.

Hearing protection will be provided at no cost to employees who perform tasks designated as having a high noise exposure and replaced as necessary. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to require employees to wear hearing protection when noise levels reach or exceed 85 dBA. Those employees will have the opportunity to choose from at least two different types of hearing protection.

Personal stereo headsets or “iPods” are not approved for hearing protection and are not permitted in any operating area.

Signage is required in areas that necessitate hearing protection. It is the responsibility of **INSERT YOUR INFORMATION / RESPONSIBLE PERSON HERE** to provide signage to appropriate areas.

Preformed earplugs and earmuffs should be washed periodically and stored in a clean area. Foam inserts should be discarded after each use. Hands should be washed before handling preformed earplugs and foam inserts to prevent contaminants from being placed in the ear.

**INSERT YOUR INFORMATION / RESPONSIBLE PERSON HERE** will keep a log of the areas or job tasks designated as requiring hearing protection, as well as the personnel affected by this Hearing Conservation Program.

# AUDIOGRAMS

Audiometric Testing

Audiometric testing will be made available to all employees who have average noise exposure levels at or above 85 dBA on an 8-hour basis. Testing will be overseen by a qualified physician but may be performed by qualified health professionals or trained technicians.

Baseline Audiograms

A baseline audiogram must be provided to an employee within six months of an employee's first exposure at or above 85 dBA. Testing to establish a baseline audiogram shall be preceded by at least 14 hours of workplace noise exposures less than 80 dBA as measured without hearing protectors.

Routine Audiograms

Audiometric testing will be repeated at least annually for all individuals exposed to greater than 85 dBA. The audiograms will be compared to the baseline audiogram and other previous routine audiograms to determine whether any significant threshold shift has occurred.

Significant Threshold Shifts

A Significant Threshold Shift (STS) is defined as an average shift or decrease in hearing in either ear of 10 dB or more at the 2000, 3000, or 4000 Hz frequencies. When a comparison of audiograms reveals a significant threshold shift, a retest will be performed to determine whether the shift is permanent. The retest shall be preceded by at least 14 hours of workplace noise exposures less than 80 dBA as measured without hearing protectors.

When a qualified health professional diagnoses STS, the following actions will be taken:

1. The employee will be notified in writing within 21 days from the time that the determination is made showing STS, and referred to further medical evaluation.

1. Employees not using hearing protectors shall be fitted with hearing protectors, trained in their use and care, and required to use them.
2. Employees already using hearing protectors shall be fitted and retrained in the use of hearing protectors offering greater attenuation, if necessary.
3. When a health professional determines that the STS is work-related, the illness will be recorded on the OSHA Form 300.

The latest audiogram may be substituted for the original baseline audiogram if the professional supervising the program determines that the employee's STS is persistent. This will ensure that the same shift is not repeatedly identified.

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# TRAINING

Affected employees will be required to attend training concerning the proper usage and wearing of hearing protection. The training will be conducted by **INSERT AGENCY’S NAME** or a designated representative, within a month of hire and annually thereafter.

Training shall consist of the following components:

* + - How noise affects hearing and hearing loss
    - Review of the OSHA hearing protection standard
    - Explanation of audiometric testing
    - Rules and procedures
    - Locations where hearing protection is required
    - How to use and care for hearing protectors.

Training records will be maintained by **INSERT YOUR INFORMATION / RESPONSIBLE PERSON HERE**.

# RECORDKEEPING

Noise exposure measurement records will be maintained for at least two years. Records of audiometric test results will be maintained for the duration of employment of the affected employees, plus 30 years. Audiometric test records will include:

1. The name and job classification of the employee;

2. The date;

3. The examiner's name

4. The date of acoustic or exhaustive calibration and measurements of background sound pressure levels in audiometric test rooms; and

5. The employee's most recent noise exposure measurement.