



Policy &
Procedure

HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Supersedes:

Date Approved: September 15, 2014

Approved:

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POLICY

In accordance with OSHA's Hearing Conservation Standard 1910.95, the City of Duluth has adopted the following program to minimize employee hearing loss.

I. INTRODUCTION

- The requirements of this program are mandatory while working for the City of Duluth. They apply to all employees, visitors and contractors.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF NOISE SOURCES

- Noise levels will be determined for all high-noise areas and equipment.
- Representative monitoring will be performed to determine personnel exposures where appropriate.
- Equipment (excluding vehicles), or areas with operating noise levels equal to or exceeding 85 decibels will be identified with labels or signs, which will be posted on the individual pieces of equipment, or at the entrance to noisy areas.
- The sign or label will state either "Hearing Protection Is Required While the Equipment Is Operating" or "Hearing Protection Is Required While Working in the Area" or similar wording, as appropriate.
- Labels will be placed where the operator can readily see the warning, such as next to power switches.

III. HEARING PROTECTION

- Appropriate hearing protection will be worn as specified by project supervisors.
- Only City-approved hearing protection will be used. Employees may supply their own hearing protection if they so choose, but it must be approved by the employee's supervisor, the Public Works Safety Coordinator, or the Safety and Training Officer.
- Hearing protection will be worn at all times when noise levels are suspected to equal or exceed 90 decibels.
- Use of earphones with internal radio receivers is prohibited during work activities, except by members of divisions who use these transmitters for communication purposes.

IV. TRAINING & DOCUMENTATION

- Once each calendar year, hearing conservation training will be conducted for all employees who are suspected of exceeding their OSHA noise exposure limit of 85 decibels over a time weighted average (TWA) of 8 hours. Noise exposure calculations will be done by the Safety Staff as needed.
- Training will be conducted by either a designated department trainer, or by a member of the City Safety Staff.
- At a minimum, the training program will include a discussion of the following:
 - The purpose of hearing protection
 - The effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages of various types of hearing protection
 - Pertinent noise-monitoring results
 - Specific equipment and/or operations that produce high noise levels
 - The purpose of audiometric testing and an explanation of testing procedures
- Training records will be kept on file in the Safety Office.



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V. REDUCTION OF NOISE LEVELS

- Whenever practical, noise levels identified as exceeding 85 decibels will be reduced by means of engineering or administrative controls, including isolation, enclosure and application of noise-reduction materials.
- Noise reduction ratings (NRRs) will be considered when selecting the type of hearing protection (ear plugs, ear muffs or both) for a particular job.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES

- Each employee is responsible for:
 - Following the instructions received in the training program
 - Wearing proper hearing protection when needed
- Supervisors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that:
 - Hearing protection is used in areas or operations where such use is required
 - Adequate supplies of ear plugs or other hearing protection devices are available
 - Hearing protection devices are adequate for anticipated employee noise exposure levels
 - Audiometric testing is done annually on employees who are exceeding their OSHA noise exposure limit.
- Safety personnel are responsible for ensuring that:
 - High-noise areas and equipment are identified and labeled accordingly
 - Occupational noise surveys are conducted on an annual basis
 - Affected employees receive appropriate training

VII. HEARING CONSERVATION PLAN ENROLLMENT

- If any employees are found to be exceeding their OSHA noise exposure limit of 85 decibels over an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA), one or more of the following actions will be taken:
 - The noise source will be assessed to determine the feasibility of lowering its noise output. Subsequent maintenance actions or installation of attenuating materials may then occur to reduce the noise at the source.
 - If the noise level cannot be reduced in the work area, the employee will be offered annual audiograms, as per OSHA requirement. They will also be required to wear hearing protection when exposed to noise levels at or above 85 decibels.
 - If an employee experiences a Standard Threshold Shift (STS) of 10 decibels or more, as detected through the annual audiogram program, the employee or their supervisor must inform the Safety and Training Officer. Hearing shifts of this severity are considered OSHA recordable injuries and must be documented as such.

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