



Hearing Protection Update

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News and information about noise exposure and hearing protection

Hearing Conservation Checklist for Occupational Noise

Employees exposed to 8-hour Time-Weighted Average (TWA) sound levels at or above 85 decibels on the A-weighting scale (dBA) should be enrolled in a hearing conservation program. This checklist provides an overview of the main components of an effective hearing conservation program, based on OSHA requirements¹ and NIOSH recommendations. For more information consult the OSHA Noise & Hearing Conservation e-tool online at: www.osha.gov or visit NIOSH online at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/>

Monitor Noise Exposure

- Choose the best method for noise monitoring
- Identify employees exposed at or above 85 dBA TWA
- Notify employees of results

Provide Hearing Tests Annually

- Provide audiometric tests for each person enrolled in the hearing conservation program
- Document "baseline" hearing test (audiogram) as soon as possible after noise exposure begins
- Re-test hearing annually and compare to baseline
- Notify employees of results
- Refer employees for audiology or medical evaluation as needed

Provide Hearing Conservation Training Annually

- Inform employees about the need to protect their hearing
- Educate employees about noise, proper use of hearing protectors, and the importance of hearing testing
- Verify that employees can fit hearing protectors correctly

Provide a Variety of Hearing Protectors

- Offer at least one type of earplug and one type of earmuff. When employees have more hearing protection devices (HPDs) to choose from, they are more likely to find those that fit comfortably



Selecting Hearing Protectors

- Select the most comfortable HPDs; they are more likely to be worn when they should be²
- Choose HPDs that are practical and easy-to-use
- Verify that the HPD is capable of reducing the 8-hour TWA noise exposure of workers to 90 dBA or less

- Focus on comfort; it is a better predictor of effective protection than the Noise Reduction Rating (NRR)²
- Reduce the NRR by 50% for a better estimate of the workplace noise reduction most wearers can achieve
- Offer HPDs that are compatible with other protective equipment being worn

Keep Records of Hearing Conservation Program Activities

- Keep noise exposure records for two years
- Keep audiometric test records for the duration of employment of the affected employee
- Document "recordable" hearing loss cases on the OSHA 300 Log form (OSHA reg. 1904.10)

References

1. "Occupational Noise Exposure," Occ. Safety and Health Admin., Code of Federal Reg., Title 29, part 1910.95
2. Arezes, P. M. and Miguel, A. S. (2002). "Hearing Protectors Acceptability in Noisy Environments," *Ann. Occup. Hyg.* 46(6), 531-536

3M Occupational Health and Environmental Safety Division

3M Center, Building 235-2W-70
St. Paul, MN 55144-1000

Contact 3M

Technical Help	1-800-243-4630
Customer Service	1-800-328-1667
Fax-on-Demand	1-800-646-1655
Web Site	3M.com/Occsafety

3M offers a full line of comfortable hearing protectors and training tools. Visit 3M online or call for more information on 3M Hearing Protection Products.