



**Scope**

This program<sup>1</sup> provides employees with the basic information for addressing the risks associated with exposure to elevated noise levels in the workplace.

**Purpose**

Occupational noise exposure provides a risk to employees as they perform a variety of job duties. The effects of overexposure to noise are of utmost concern because they are permanent and affect the lives of employees both on and off the job. The purpose of this program is to protect employees from potential damage to their hearing from occupational noise exposures.

**Member-Level Responsibilities**

On the line below, list the job title of the person who has primary responsibility for oversight of this policy. \_\_\_\_\_

The member is responsible for providing necessary equipment, conducting or arranging for the necessary training, and otherwise ensuring that this program is effectively implemented.

**Identification of Work Areas**

On the lines below, list work areas and/or tasks that require mandatory hearing protection on the part of all employees. Typical areas to consider include rooms/areas where compressors are located or the use of jackhammers and chain saws.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employees are responsible for wearing hearing protection devices where required and for properly cleaning any hearing protection devices assigned to them. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action. All supervisors are expected to assure that employees are wearing hearing protection when required and should conduct frequent inspections of the workplace to ensure compliance with this program.

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<sup>1</sup> The content of this program is based upon the following regulations:  
• Pennsylvania Title 34, Part VIII, Bureau of Workers' Compensation – Chapter 129, Subchapter D §129.452; Group Self-Insurance Fund's AIPP Requirements  
• Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations for Occupational Noise Exposure, 29 CFR 1910.95



**Employee Monitoring**

When information indicates that any employee's exposure may equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels (the Action Level, or AL), monitoring will be utilized to ascertain the exposure level. All continuous, intermittent and impulsive sound levels from 80 decibels to 130 decibels will be integrated into the noise measurements. Monitoring will be repeated whenever a change in production, process, equipment or controls increases noise exposures to the extent that:

- Additional employees may be exposed at or above the action level; or
- The attenuation provided by hearing protectors being used by employees may be rendered inadequate to meet the requirements.

**Engineering and Administrative Controls**

When employees are subjected to sound exceeding those listed in Table G-16 (as reprinted from 29 CFR 1910.95), feasible administrative or engineering controls will be utilized. If such controls fail to reduce sound levels within the levels of Table G-16, personal protective equipment shall be provided and used to reduce sound levels within the levels of the table.

**Table G-16 – Permissible Noise Exposure (in dBA) Sound Level**

| <b>Duration per day (hours)</b> | <b>dBA (slow response)</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>16</b>                       | <b>85</b>                  |
| <b>8</b>                        | <b>90</b>                  |
| <b>4</b>                        | <b>95</b>                  |
| <b>3</b>                        | <b>97</b>                  |
| <b>2</b>                        | <b>100</b>                 |
| <b>1.5</b>                      | <b>102</b>                 |
| <b>1</b>                        | <b>105</b>                 |
| <b>0.5</b>                      | <b>110</b>                 |
| <b>0.25 or less</b>             | <b>115</b>                 |

The consideration of engineering and administrative controls to reduce noise levels to those listed in Table G-16 will be documented, and will include the control considered, the amount of noise reduction anticipated or experienced, and methods to ensure the controls remain effective. If a control is considered, but not utilized because of infeasibility, those reasons will also be documented.



### **Permissible Exposure Limit**

A Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) of 90 dB has been established. The use of hearing protection will be mandatory in areas or while performing tasks that expose employees to noise levels at or above the PEL. Employees whose job tasks expose them to noise levels at or above the PEL will also be required to participate in annual audiograms and training.

An Action Level (AL) of 85 dBA will also be established. Employees whose job tasks expose them to noise levels at or above the AL will be notified of the exposure, will be required to participate in annual audiograms to monitor their hearing levels, participate in annual training about the effects of exposure to excessive noise, and will be offered a variety of hearing protection devices (discussed below). The use of hearing protection for this group of employees will be voluntary.

### **Audiometric Testing**

Within 6 months of an employee's first exposure at or above the AL or upon assignment to a task or the requirement to work in an area where previously evaluated noise exposures exceed the AL, a valid baseline audiogram will be conducted against which subsequent annual audiograms can be compared.

Testing to establish a baseline audiogram shall be preceded by at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise. Audiogram records will be kept for the duration noted below. Audiogram records will include the following information:

- Name and job classification of the employee;
- Date of the audiogram;
- The examiner's name;
- Date of the last acoustic or exhaustive calibration of the audiometer; and
- Employee's most recent noise exposure assessment.

### **Standard Threshold Shifts**

Each employee's annual audiogram shall be compared to that employee's baseline audiogram to determine if the audiogram is valid and if a standard threshold shift as defined in 29 CFR 1910.95 has occurred. (A change in hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dB or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz in either ear.) This comparison may be done by a technician. If the annual audiogram shows that an employee has suffered a standard threshold shift, a retest within 30 days will occur and the results of the retest will be considered to be the annual audiogram.



If a comparison of the annual audiogram to the baseline audiogram indicates a standard threshold shift has occurred, the employee will be informed of this fact in writing, within 21 days of the determination. Unless a physician determines that the standard threshold shift is not work related or aggravated by occupational noise exposure, the following steps will occur:

- Employees who are not using hearing protectors will be fitted with hearing protectors, trained in their use and care, and required to use them.
- Employees who are already using hearing protectors shall be refitted and retrained in the use of hearing protectors and provided with hearing protectors offering greater attenuation if necessary.

If subsequent audiometric testing of an employee whose exposure to noise is less than an 8-hour TWA of 90 decibels indicates that a standard threshold shift is not persistent, the employee will be informed of the new audiometric interpretation and may discontinue the required use of hearing protection.

### **Hearing Protection Devices**

All employees who are required to wear hearing protection devices or who chose to wear them will be offered a variety of types to choose from, including disposable ear plugs, ear canal caps and ear muffs. All hearing protection devices available to employees will be selected based upon their ability to reduce the employee's noise exposure to doses below the AL, as based upon the Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) of the individual device and the specific task the employee is to be performing or area in which they will be working while wearing the hearing protection devices. All hearing protection devices will be made available to employees at no cost.

### **Training**

All employees who work in areas or perform tasks where they may be exposed to noise levels at the AL or higher will participate in an annual training program. The training will occur prior to an employee performing a job task or working in an area with known exposure at or above the AL. When new job tasks or work areas are discovered to produce noise exposure at or above the AL, all employees who were not previously part of the training program will receive such training at the earliest opportunity but no longer than two weeks from the discovery of the exposure.

Training is repeated annually. Information provided during the training will be updated to be consistent with changes in protective equipment and work processes. The training will ensure that each employee is informed of the following:

- The effects of noise on hearing;
- The purpose of hearing protectors, the advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types, and instructions on selection, fitting, use, and care; and
- The purpose of audiometric testing, and an explanation of the test procedures and results.



### **Recordkeeping**

All records required by this program will be kept according to the following requirements:

- Noise exposure measurements will be kept for at least two years;
- Audiometric test records will be kept for the duration of the employee's employment;
- Training records will be kept for at least five years.

### **Program Evaluation**

On an annual basis this program will be reviewed to assure that it is current and meets the needs of all employees. Appropriate changes will be made as soon as new hazards have been identified, and employees will be trained on these changes.