## Noise Exposure

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this procedure is to protect the hearing of employees from damage caused by exposure to occupational noise.

1. **Responsibility**

The Person-in-Charge shall:

* Strictly enforce the use of hearing protection.
* Post warning signs in high noise areas.

Safety Department shall:

* Schedule personnel employed in high noise areas for annual audiograms.
* Conduct sound level surveys and noise dosimetry in potential high noise areas and maintain documentation.
* Provide training materials.
* Maintain the audiometric records.

1. **Procedure**

A continuing effective hearing conservation program shall be administered when employees are exposed to sound levels greater than 85 dbA on an 8 hour time-weighted average basis. When information indicates that employee exposure may equal/exceed the 8 hr time-weighted average of 85 decibels, a monitoring program shall be implemented to identify employees to be included in the hearing conservation program.

All employees whose exposure equals or exceeds an eight hour time weighted average of 85 decibels will receive a baseline audiogram. This test will be conducted within six months of the employee’s first exposure at or above the action level. Before testing, the employee must have at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise. Hearing protection may be used to meet this requirement.

All employees exposed at or above an 8 hour time weighted average of 85 decibels shall receive an annual audiogram. This audiogram will be compared to the baseline test to determine if the employee has had a standard threshold shift. If a threshold shift has occurred, the employee shall be notified, in writing, of the results within 21 days of the determination. Also, in the event of an employee threshold shift, the hearing protection being used shall be reviewed and modified if necessary and a medical evaluation may be required. All test and exposure records shall be maintained as required by state and federal regulations.

1. **Hearing Protection**

* Hearing protector attenuation shall be evaluated for the specific noise environments in which the protector will be used.
* Appropriate hearing protection is provided at no cost to the employee and MUST be worn by all personnel in areas where signs are posted warning of excessive noise levels.
* Hearing protection should also be worn in un-posted areas where temporary excessive noise may exist.
* Radios and headsets are not allowed on the work site unless being used for work related communications.
* In the event that ear plugs cannot be worn by an employee for medical reasons, a written excuse, signed by a medical doctor must be furnished. Another type of hearing protection will be provided.
* Hearing protection shall be required at locations where personnel are exposed to noise at or above 85 dB averaged over an eight hour work period. These locations will be identified by the safety department and employees working in these areas are required to wear the appropriate hearing protection.
* Employees shall be given the opportunity to select their hearing protectors from a variety of suitable hearing protectors provided by the employer.
* Hearing protection is provided to employees at no cost.

1. **Training**

A training program shall be provided initially for all employees who are exposed to a noise action level or work in high noise areas. The training shall be repeated annually for each employee. And training will be provided on the proper use of hearing protection.

Re-training shall be provided consistent to changes in PPE and work processes to include the proper techniques of wearing hearing protection.