

Program Profile Series

Number Fourteen



HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

SCOPE - High noise levels in a facility should be evaluated to determine the degree of hazard and the appropriate protection. If noise levels exceed established OSHA minimum standards then a formal hearing conservation program must be established.

AUTHORITY/REFERENCE - OSHA 29 CFR 1910.95



ACCOUNTABILITY - Protection against the effects of noise exposure shall be provided by the employer when sound levels equal or exceed a minimum exposure of an 8-hour time-weighted average sound level of 90 decibels measured on the A scale (slow response) or an equivalent 100% dose. See table G-16 for permissible exposure times for sound levels greater than 90 dBA.

The employer shall maintain an accurate record of all employee exposure measurements. The employer shall also retain all employee audiometric test records obtained as a result of this standard. Noise exposure records shall be kept for two years. Audiometric records shall be retained for the duration of the affected employee's employment.

When exposure levels do not exceed 90 dBA over an eight hour limit but do exceed 85 dBA for the same eight hour time period (equal to a 50% dose) the employer shall administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS - The required hearing conservation program contains the following five elements:

1. Monitoring - When STET results indicate that any employee's exposure may equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dBA, the employer shall develop and implement a noise monitoring program.
2. Audiometric Testing - The employer shall establish an audiometric testing program making the testing available at no cost to all employees whose exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dBA.
3. Hearing Protectors - Employers shall make hearing protectors available to all employees exposed to an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dBA or greater at no cost to the employee. A variety of types and sizes of hearing protection shall be available. Hearing protectors shall be replaced as necessary. Employers shall ensure that hearing protection is worn.
4. Employee Notification - The employer shall notify each employee exposed at or above an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dBA of the results of the monitoring. The employer shall make available to affected employees or their representative's copies of the standard and shall post a copy in the workplace.

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5. Recordkeeping - The employer shall keep accurate records of the noise monitoring (retaining them for a minimum of two years) and the audiometric tests (maintaining them, minimally, for as long as the employee is employed by the company).

The training shall include the effects of noise on hearing, advantages and disadvantages of different types of hearing protection. How to select, fit, use and care for hearing protection and the purpose of the audiometric testing and explanation of the testing procedures.

TRAINING - The employer shall institute a training program for all employees who are exposed to noise at or above an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dBA and shall ensure employee participation in the program.

DEFINITIONS - dBA -- decibels measured on the A scale of the sound level meter (the A scale most closely matches the response of the human ear).
Time Weighted Average -- also written TWA

CROSS REFERENCING - Table G-16 from OSHA 29 CFR 1910.95

Duration/day hours	Sound level dBA slow
8	90
6	92
4	95
3	97
2	100
1 1/2	102
1	105
1/2	110
1/4 or less	115

RESPONSIBILITY - Who is going to see that the program is developed and implemented including creating and conducting the training.

This series has been designed to provide the basic information necessary to develop written programs and appropriate training as required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. They are not intended to be or become a written program. They are a guideline for the creation of a program specific to a company