

# UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

SUBJECT: HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Procedure No: S-08-029

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## PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Managers of departments whose employees are exposed to noise at or above the 8-hour time weighted average shall develop a Hearing Conservation Policy providing participation in the Audiometric Testing Program (Section II), the availability of hearing protective devices (Section III) and training (Section IV).

## PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has mandated in its Noise Standard, 29 CFR 1910.95, that a Hearing Conservation Plan shall be implemented if employees are exposed to noise levels equal to or exceeding the 8-hour time weighted average sound level of 85 decibels measured on the A-scale (slow response).

## PROCEDURE

### I. Monitoring

Monitoring shall be conducted by the Safety & Health Department upon request or when evidence suggests that any employee's exposure may equal or exceed an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels.

- A. This survey will allow for the determination of individuals who will be included in the Hearing Conservation Program as well as for selection of control technologies and of proper Hearing Protection Devices.
- B. Monitoring shall be repeated whenever changes in production, process, equipment, or controls cause an increase in noise exposures, such that:
  1. new employees are exposed at or above the 85 decibels level; or,
  2. attenuation by hearing protectors becomes insufficient to protect workers.
- C. Employees exposed at or above the 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels shall be informed of the results of monitoring by the Safety & Health Department.
- D. Employees will be offered the opportunity to observe any monitoring conducted in their work area pursuant to this section.
- E. If exposures to noise exceed the 8-hour time weighted average action level of 85 decibels, immediate action will be initiated to reduce exposure levels. If this cannot be readily achieved, a Department-Specific Hearing Conservation Policy shall be adopted by the affected department.

### II. Audiometric Testing Program (Medical Surveillance)

Audiometric testing is provided to employees whose exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or who are subjected to noise levels above 115 decibels. This is made available through Audiology, on the Health Science Campus, following the criteria listed below and in accordance with the Occupational Safety & Health Administration Noise Standard.

- A. The testing program will be charged to the department and provided at no cost to the employee.
- B. Managers shall ensure that audiograms are offered to employees within six months of their first exposure at or above the action level of 85 decibels to establish a valid baseline audiogram against which following audiograms be compared.

Managers should ensure that testing to establish a baseline is preceded by 14 hours without exposure to high level work place noise; Hearing Protective Device's may satisfy this requirement.

- C. Annual audiograms shall be offered after establishing a baseline audiogram for each employee exposed at or above the 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels, for comparison by individuals in University Health Services or the Audiology Department.
- D. If a comparison of the annual audiogram to the baseline audiogram indicates a standard threshold shift of 10 decibels at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hertz in either ear, the employee shall be notified in writing within 21 days of the determination by University Health Services or Audiology following the process described in Policy HM-08-016, Environmental/Occupational Monitoring and Medical Surveillance.
- E. Unless the University Health Services' physician determines that the standard threshold shift was not work related or aggravated by occupational exposure, managers working with the Safety and Health Department shall ensure that the following steps are taken when a standard threshold shift occurs.
  - 1. Employees not using hearing protection devices shall be fitted and trained in their use and care, and required to use them.
  - 2. Employees already wearing hearing protection devices shall be refitted and retrained in their use and provided with devices offering greater attenuation, if necessary.
  - 3. The employee shall be referred for a clinical audiologic or otological evaluation, if additional testing is deemed necessary by the University Health Services' physician or if the employer suspects the cause or aggravation of the medical pathology by the wearing of hearing protection devices.
- F. If subsequent audiometric testing of an employee, whose exposure to noise is less than an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels, indicates that a standard threshold shift is not persistent, the Safety & Health Department shall:
  - 1. inform the employee of the new audiometric interpretation; and,
  - 2. discontinue use of required (as described by Table I) hearing protectors for that employee.
- G. A revised baseline may be substituted when a physician determines that the standard threshold shift is persistent, or the audiogram indicates significant improvement over original baseline audiogram.

### III. Hearing Protection Devices

- A. Administrative and engineering controls should first be considered and ruled out before deciding to implement any type of hearing protection device.
- B. Managers shall make hearing protection devices available to all employees exposed to an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or greater at no cost to the employee. Hearing protectors shall be replaced as necessary.
- C. Managers will ensure that hearing protection devices are worn:
  - 1. by employees who are required to wear hearing protection devices because they are exposed to the 8-hour time weighted average Permissible Exposure Limit of 85 decibels A-Scale or to equivalent levels described in Table I.
  - 2. by any employee who is exposed to an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or greater, and who has not yet received a baseline audiogram, or has experienced a standard threshold shift.
  - 3. by employees in an area where engineering controls are being implemented.

Table I. Permissible Noise Exposures for Durations Equal to or Less Than 8 Hours

Duration Per Day, Hours	Sound Level Decibels (A-Scale) Slow Response
8	90
6	92
4	95
3	97
2	100
1.5	102
1	105
0.5	110
.25 or less	115

- D. This program shall provide employees the opportunity to select hearing protectors from a variety of devices approved by the Safety & Health Department.
- E. Hearing Protector Attenuation
  - 1. The Safety & Health Department shall ensure that the noise attenuation of hearing protection devices provided to employees are appropriate for the noise environment in which they are to be used.
  - 2. Hearing protective devices must attenuate employee exposures at least to an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or below.

#### IV. Training Program

- A. The Safety & Health Department shall provide a training program for all employees exposed to an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or greater. Department managers shall ensure employee participation. Training is provided under the following guidelines.
  - 1. The program shall be repeated annually for each employee in the Hearing Conservation Program and all materials used for training shall be made available for employee review.
  - 2. The training program shall be updated to reflect changes in exposures and advances in hearing protection devices.
  - 3. Specifically, the training shall address:
    - a. the effects of noise on hearing.
    - b. the purpose of hearing protection devices, advantages and disadvantages, attenuation information, instructions on selection, fitting, use, and care.
    - c. the purpose of audiometric testing and an explanation of the test itself.
- B. The Safety & Health Department shall provide employees with information regarding the noise standard and shall provide a copy of the standard upon request.

#### V. Record Keeping

Audiogram (medical surveillance) documentation shall be disseminated and maintained as described in Policy HM-08-016, Environmental/Occupational Monitoring and Medical Surveillance.

Source: Safety & Health Committee

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