



**Duke University - Facilities Management Department
Environmental Safety and Health Program**

HEARING CONSERVATION SAFETY PROGRAM

Area: All FMD Organizations	Date Effective: 14 April 2012
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A. Purpose

1. The purpose of this program is to ensure noise producing tasks and noise areas are identified and controlled and all regulatory and Duke requirements are complied with in order to protect the safety and health of Facilities Management (FMD) employees, contractors, and visitors.

B. Scope

1. This Hearing Conservation Program (HCP) applies to FMD employees, contractors working for FMD, and visitors who work around operations where control of noise exposure may be needed to prevent the possibility of work-related noise-induced hearing loss.

C. Policy

1. Duke University's policy is to take every precaution to protect its employees against work-related noise-induced hearing loss. Whenever feasible, hazardous noise must be eliminated through engineering or supervisory controls prior to resorting to the use of the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hearing protection. In certain environments, noise levels may be below harmful levels but may present irritation to employees. Any action to reduce irritant noise levels are optional and may be chosen at the discretion of each department head. Failure to follow the requirements of the HCP will be cause for disciplinary action.

D. Definitions

1. **Action Level:** An 8 hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels, or 82 decibels for a 12 hour time-weighted average, measured on the A-scale, slow response, or equivalently, a dose of fifty percent.
2. **Baseline Audiogram:** The hearing test against which future audiograms (hearing tests) are compared. This is required to be completed when an employee first comes to work at FMD.
3. **Decibel (dB):** Unit of measurement of sound level.
4. **Hearing Conservation Program:** A program whose purpose is to protect employees against recognized noise hazards. It can entail noise monitoring, an annual audiogram, and/or annual training for affected employees.
5. **Noise Dosimeter:** An instrument that integrates a function of sound pressure over a period in such a manner that it directly indicates a noise dose.
6. **Sound Level Meter:** An instrument for the measurement of sound level.
7. **Time-Weighted Average Sound Level:** That sound level exposure averaged over an 8-hour exposure.

E. Responsibilities

1. The Occupational and Environmental Safety Office (OESO) will:
 - a. Conduct periodic noise monitoring to assess the need for hearing protection, and conduct periodic inspections to assess hearing protection storage and use.
 - b. Recommend appropriate hearing protection.
 - c. Provide training to all employees in the HCP. This training, unless otherwise stipulated, is completed on-line.
 - d. Maintain documentation of training for employees participating in the HCP.
2. Employee Occupational Health and Wellness (EOHW) will:
 - a. Conduct baseline audiograms for all new employees entering positions which have the potential for exposure to hazardous levels of noise.
 - b. Conduct annual audiograms for all employees required to participate in the HCP.
3. FMD will:
 - a. Provide appropriate hearing protective devices to employees exposed to hazardous noise levels.

Revision History

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- b. Advise OESO when a change in production, process, equipment, or controls increases noise exposures to the extent that additional employees need to be included in the program, further noise monitoring needs to be accomplished, or hearing protection is no longer adequate.
- 4. Supervisors will:
 - a. Ensure that employees wear hearing protection when required.
 - b. Post high-noise areas and equipment with signs or stickers identifying the noise hazard.
 - c. Coordinate and facilitate employees going to EOHW for all audiograms. Supervisors should ensure that employees have not been exposed to hazardous noise for the 14 hours prior to their audiogram.
- 5. Employees will:
 - a. Care for their hearing protection.
 - b. Wear hearing protection properly and when required.
 - c. Complete identified training requirements.
 - d. Report any concerns to their supervisor.

F. Procedures

- 1. Employees exposed to noise levels at or above the action level will be included in the HCP. Using monitoring equipment, noise levels will be determined by the Occupational Hygiene and Safety Division of the OESO.
- 2. The Hearing Conservation Program requires initial and annual employee training and audiograms, in addition to the use of hearing protection when required.
- 3. When practicable, engineering and/or administrative controls must be implemented to reduce employee exposures below 85 dBA.
- 4. The use of hearing protection is mandatory when:
 - a. Employees are working in an area with noise levels greater than 85 dBA.
 - b. Employees are working with portable equipment that produces noise levels greater than 85 dBA.

G. Training

- 1. The target population for this class (available online and in-person by request) is employees included in the HCP. The goals for this class are to teach employees to understand how noise levels are measured, how hearing tests work, how to understand the health effects associated with noise exposures, and how engineering and administrative controls are used to reduce exposures to noise. This training is required annually.
- 2. There is also an online class for supervisors, to make them aware of their responsibilities under this program. If the supervisor is enrolled in the HCP, this training is required annually. If the supervisor is not enrolled in the HCP, but supervises employees who are, this training is required once every three years.

H. References

- 1. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 29 part 1910.95 (OSHA), Occupational Noise Exposure
- 2. Duke Safety Manual, Section 2, General Safety and Health, Chapter 3, Occupational Noise Exposure

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