

## ***DC 37 SAFETY AND HEALTH FACT SHEET***

### ***HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM***

#### **FACTS AT A GLANCE**

- There are an estimated 48 million people in the United States with impaired hearing.
- 50 dB Large office  
60 dB Conversation  
90-115 dB Subway  
120 dB Snow blower  
130 Jackhammer
- Continued exposure to noise over 85 dBA will eventually harm hearing. The exposure time is cut in half for every 5 decibel increase. OSHA (95 dBA, then 4 hours of exposure, over time, will cause hearing loss).
- Annual training shall be provided to employees.
- Varied hearing protectors shall be available to employees at no cost.
- Audiometric test results shall be maintained for the duration of the employee's employment.
- Once damaged, your auditory nerve and cilia cannot be repaired.

**The employer shall administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program, whenever employee noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average sound level (TWA) of 85 decibels.**

#### **Monitoring Program**

Whenever any employee's exposure may equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels (action level), the employer shall develop and implement a monitoring program.

Continuous, intermittent and impulsive sound levels from 80 decibels to 130 decibels shall be integrated into the noise measurements.

#### **Employee Notification**

The employer shall notify each employee exposed at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels of the results of the monitoring.

#### **Audiometric Testing**

The employer shall make audiometric testing available to all employees whose exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels.

The program shall be provided at no cost to employees.

Audiometric tests shall be performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist, or other physician, or by a technician who is certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation. A technician who performs audiometric tests must be responsible to an audiologist, otolaryngologist or physician.

#### **Baseline**

Shall be established within 6 months of an employee's first exposure at or above the action level.

#### **Mobile test van exception.**

Where mobile test vans are used the employer shall obtain a valid baseline audiogram within 1 year of an employee's first exposure at or above the action level

### **Annual Audiogram**

The employer shall obtain a new audiogram at least annually for each employee exposed at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels.

Each employee's annual audiogram shall be compared to that employee's baseline audiogram to determine if a **<sup>1</sup>standard threshold shift (STS)** occurred.

If an employee has suffered a standard threshold shift, the employer may obtain a retest within 30 days and consider the results of the retest as the annual audiogram.

If a standard threshold shift has occurred, the employee shall be informed of this fact in writing, within 21 days of the determination.

### **Hearing Protectors**

Employers shall make hearing protectors available to all employees exposed to an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels or greater at no cost to the employees. Hearing protectors shall be replaced as necessary.

Employees shall be given the opportunity to select their hearing protectors from a variety of suitable hearing protectors provided by the employer.

The employer shall provide training in the use and care of all hearing protectors provided to employees

The employer shall ensure proper initial fitting and supervise the correct use of all hearing protectors.

### **Training Program**

The employer shall train each employee who is exposed to noise at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels. The employer shall institute a training program and ensure employee participation in the program.

The training program shall be repeated annually for each employee included in the hearing conservation program. Information provided in the training program shall be updated to be consistent with changes in protective equipment and work processes.

### **Recordkeeping**

The employer shall maintain an accurate record of all employee exposure measurements.

The employer shall retain all employee audiometric test records.

Noise exposure measurement records shall be retained for two years.

Audiometric test records shall be retained for the duration of the affected employee's employment.

All records required by this section shall be provided upon request to employees, former employees, representatives designated by the individual employee, and the Assistant Secretary.

<sup>1</sup> A standard threshold shift is 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.

Sources OSHA; NIOSH