

SECTION	II. General Safety and Health
Chapter	3. Occupational Noise Exposure
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OCCUPATIONAL NOISE EXPOSURE

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Duke University's policy is to take every precaution to protect its employees against work-related noise-induced hearing loss. Whenever feasible, hazardous noise is engineered out through shielding or selection of equipment. Otherwise, hearing protective devices must be used. 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.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Departments Heads shall:

- Provide appropriate hearing protective devices to employees exposed to hazardous noise levels.
- 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, or hearing protection is no longer adequate.

Supervisors shall:

- Ensure that employees wear hearing protection when required.
- Post high-noise areas and equipment with signs or stickers identifying the noise hazard.
- Coordinate and facilitate employees going to Employee Occupational Health and Wellness for audiograms. Supervisors should ensure that employees have not been exposed to hazardous noise for the 14 hours prior to their audiogram.

Employees shall:

- Care for their hearing protection.
- Wear hearing protection properly and when required.
- Report any concerns to their supervisor.

Employee Occupational Health and Wellness shall:

- Conduct baseline audiograms for all new employees entering positions which have the potential for exposure to hazardous levels of noise.
- Conduct annual audiograms for all employees required to participate in the Hearing Conservation Program.

Occupational and Environmental Safety Office shall:

- Conduct periodic noise monitoring to assess the need for hearing protection, and conduct periodic inspections to assess hearing protection storage and use.
- Recommend appropriate hearing protection.
- Provide and maintain documentation of training for employees participating in the Hearing Conservation Program.

PROCEDURES

Employees who may receive a daily cumulative noise exposure of 85 decibels (dBA) or greater, based upon sampling over an eight hour work shift, will be included in the Hearing Conservation Program. Noise levels will be determined by the Occupational Hygiene and Safety Division of the OESO.

The Hearing Conservation Program requires initial and annual employee training and audiograms, in addition to the use of hearing protection when required.

When practicable, engineering and/or administrative controls must be implemented to reduce employee exposures below 85 dBA.

The use of hearing protection is mandatory when:

- Employees are working in an area with noise levels greater than 85 dBA.
- Employees are working with portable equipment that produces noise levels greater than 85 dBA.

TRAINING

HEARING CONSERVATION TRAINING

The target population for this class (available online and in-person by request) is employees included in the hearing conservation program *and their supervisors*. 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.

There is also an online training on the use of hearing protection devices for employees who use these devices, but who are not exposed to noise at a level that would require inclusion in the Hearing Conservation Program. This training is required once for users of hearing protection devices.

REFERENCES

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 29 Part 1910.95 (OSHA), *Occupational Noise Exposure*