

# **Environmental Health and Safety Manual (EHS)**

## **EHS 110: Hearing Conservation Program**

**Effective:** 7/1/2001

**Revised:** 10/1/2003

### **Purpose**

To protect employees from noise exposures; to conserve hearing ability; and to prevent occupational hearing loss

### **Sources**

*29 Code of Federal Regulations §1910.95*

*Arizona State University Hearing Conservation Program*

### **Applicability**

Employees who are exposed to noise greater than 85 decibels on the A scale (dBA) and/or employees who work in areas where excessive noise levels, or the potential for excessive noise levels, may exist

### **Policy**

ASU provides hearing protection to employees, when needed, to prevent occupational exposure to noise levels that exceed or may exceed permissible exposure limits established by the U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration. Administrative and/or engineering control measures, e.g., enclosures, damping with absorbants, sound insulating, job rotation, etc., must be considered and implemented, when feasible, prior to the use of hearing protection. If administrative and/or engineering controls are not feasible, appropriate hearing protection must be used.

An employee whose job function requires the use of hearing protection must receive an initial audiogram examination and training before his or her initial assignment, and annually thereafter.

### **Responsibilities of the University**

ASU maintains a [Hearing Conservation Program](#) (HCP) for university employees who may be exposed to excessive noise levels during the performance of their duties. The HCP is designed to achieve regulatory compliance and to provide a means for employees to be better informed about and protected from excessive noise levels and hearing loss.

### **Responsibilities of Environmental Health and Safety**

Environmental Health and Safety develops, implements, and maintains the university's HCP and written plan, assists departments with evaluating hearing hazards, and provides guidance on suitable control measures, including appropriate protective equipment. In addition, Environmental Health and Safety reassesses work areas as necessary and provides employee training.

Environmental Health and Safety performs an evaluation of the noise levels in suspected work areas. When measurement results indicate that any employee's noise exposure may equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) of 85 dBA, monitoring is conducted to document the exposure and determine whether the employee

should be included in the HCP. Screening and additional monitoring is repeated whenever a change in production, process, equipment, or controls increases the noise exposures. Employees who are exposed at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 dBA are notified of the results in writing.

## **Responsibilities of the Departments**

Departments and units must identify employees who may be exposed to excessive noise levels and ensure that these employees are provided the protections required by the HCP. In addition, departments must determine whether administrative and/or engineering controls can be used in lieu of hearing-protective equipment and implement these controls when feasible; establish and maintain written standard operating procedures; ensure that only properly trained and medically evaluated employees use hearing-protective equipment; and document and maintain all records pertaining to employee audiometric examinations and training.

Department supervisors are responsible for identifying potentially harmful noise levels in their work areas. Supervisors may suspect potentially harmful noise levels when noise in the work area routinely interferes with verbal communication; when noise routinely startles, annoys, or disrupts an employee or interferes with his or her ability to concentrate; or when it is the suspected cause of noticeable hearing loss or pain. Whenever a harmful noise level is suspected, the supervisor must notify Environmental Health and Safety.

All employees who are exposed to a TWA of 85 dBA or greater must receive an initial audiogram examination by a qualified physician, otolaryngologist, audiologist, or certified technician. This examination consists of a baseline audiogram and annual audiograms thereafter.

Before using hearing protection, each employee who is exposed to noise levels at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 dBA must receive training upon initial work assignment to areas that are identified as excessively noisy, and annually thereafter or upon request. Information provided in the annual training program is updated to be consistent with any changes in protection devices and work processes.

The training includes, but is not limited to, the following topics:

1. the effects of noise on hearing
2. the purpose of hearing protectors; the advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types; and instructions on selection, fitting (hands-on), use, and care
- and
3. the purpose of audiometric testing, and an explanation of the test procedures.

## **Responsibilities of Employees**

Employees who work in noisy areas during the performance of their duties must use safe work practices, wear appropriate hearing protection while performing job functions, attend training on noise and hearing protection, report changes in workplace or “noisy” conditions to their supervisors, and comply with all provisions of the HCP.

## **Procedure**

For detailed information on the hearing protection standard, to request a work area evaluation, or to schedule training, contact Environmental Health & Safety at 480/965-1823.

The employee’s department must:

1. identify potential noisy areas of concern and contact Environmental Health and Safety to schedule an evaluation
2. obtain a written copy of the university’s [Hearing Conservation Program](#) (HCP) and ensure compliance with all requirements

3. determine whether administrative and/or engineering controls can be used in lieu of protective hearing equipment and implement these controls when feasible
  4. establish and maintain written standard operating procedures and ensure that employees whose job functions require the use of hearing protection are trained on its use
  5. ensure that employees are provided with and use proper protective hearing equipment
  6. ensure that employees whose job functions require the use of hearing protection receive an initial audiogram examination and an examination annually thereafter
- and
7. document and maintain all records pertaining to employee medical examinations, training, and audiometric testing within the department.

Environmental Health and Safety's responsibilities are to:

1. develop and implement a written hearing conservation program
  2. perform noise monitoring upon request from the individual departments that are concerned with noisy areas
  3. provide guidance on written standard operating procedures, assist departments with evaluating noise and hearing hazards, and provide guidance on suitable control measures including appropriate protective equipment
  4. provide training and retraining for employees as requested by individual departments
  5. document and maintain employee training
- and
6. reassess work areas as necessary.

The employee must:

1. ensure that he or she is provided with the appropriate training, medical examinations, and hearing protection if performing duties that require the use of hearing protection
  2. wear appropriate hearing protection while performing job functions that require its use
  3. report changes in workplace or hearing loss to supervisor
- and
4. comply with all provisions of this policy as it applies to employees who are exposed to noise greater than 85 dBA and/or employees who work in areas where excessive noise levels, or the potential for excessive noise levels, may exist.

## **Cross-References**

For further information, see:

1. [EHS 103](#), "Hazard Communication Program"
  2. [EHS 105](#), "Personal Protective Equipment"
- and
3. [EHS 108](#), "Environmental Health and Safety Training."