



HEARING CONSERVATION OVERVIEW

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In order to minimize the exposure of employees to harmful noise levels that could cause hearing loss, a business must have a consistent, documented method in place to protect its employees and comply with the law (OSHA Act 29CFR1910.95).

The following is a brief outline of the requirements of a hearing conservation program:

1. **Noise Level Monitoring** – Employers must have a Hearing Conservation Program if employees are exposed to noise levels at or above 85 decibels (dB) over an eight-hour time-weighted average* through the course of a normal work day. For example, a chain saw in operation can typically generate 105 to 115 dB. (Note: There are smartphone decibel meter apps available to measure noise levels.)
2. **Audiometric Testing** – Hearing tests must be available at no cost to all employees who are continuously exposed to a noise level of 85 dB or above over time. Elements of a testing program are baseline (employee's first test) and annual audiograms, training, and follow-up procedures.
3. **Hearing Protection** – Two types of hearing protection (ear plugs, ear muffs; employee can choose which type) must be available to all employees (free of charge) exposed to noise levels of 85 dB or above.
4. **Training** – Employees exposed to noise levels of 85 dB or higher must have documented annual training in the use of protective equipment and the potential dangers of excessive noise.
5. **Recordkeeping** – Noise exposure measurement records must be retained for two years. Records of audiometric tests must be maintained for employees during their employment. Workplace injuries involving hearing loss must be documented on the OSHA Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses.

Any employee recording a change in hearing during follow-up testing must be informed in writing by the employer within 21 days. It is important to have a program in place and have baseline audiograms performed on all new employees. For more information, see OSHA 3074 ("Hearing Conservation," www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3074.pdf) or contact your area OSHA office, insurance representative, or physician.

*Time-weighted average means an employee must be exposed to an average of 85dB or greater over an eight-hour shift.