|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 2.12 Hearing Conservation  General Information for HHW Programs |

# 1. Introduction

*Note: This guidance document is for informational purposes only and outlines basic OSHA employer requirements. The MPCA makes no guarantee that this document satisfies the requirements of its users ensuring OSHA compliance. It is the sole responsibility of your specific Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program employer(s) to determine if OSHA requirements have been met.*

This Program must implement an occupational [hearing conservation program](https://www.osha.gov/noise/standards) to prevent temporary or permanent noise-induced hearing loss when employee exposure is at or exceeds the action level based on an 8-hour time-weighted average of [85dB(A).](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/noise/about/noise.html) The Program dedicated employee responsible for implementing and maintaining a hearing conservation program is [\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_].

# 2. Noise monitoring

2.1 Monitor noise levels in facility to determine if employee exposures are at or above the   
8-hour action level of 85 dB(A). If staff complain of temporary hearing loss or need to increase their voice volume (or shout) from a distance of up to three feet, it may be an indicator that noise levels are exceeding [acceptable OSHA limits](https://www.osha.gov/noise). If noise levels exceed the action level, implement a hearing conservation program.

2.2 Monitoring must be repeated whenever there is a change in facility operations or equipment that might increase noise levels to the point of exceeding the acceptable limits.

# 3. Hearing protection

3.1 Hearing protection must be provided to all employees who are exposed to noise exceeding acceptable limits.

3.2 Employees must be required to wear hearing protection in designated areas or while performing specific tasks, i.e., forklift or compactor usage, etc.

# 4. Audiometric testing

If noise levels are suspected of exceeding acceptable limits, audiometric testing must be provided at no cost by a licensed/certified audiologist, physician, or technician.

4.1 A baseline audiogram must be conducted within six months of initial noise exposure (or 12 months if testing is done by a mobile test van service).

* Testing must be preceded by at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise (hearing protection may be used as a substitute).
* Employees must be notified of the need to avoid high levels of non–occupational noise during the 14-hour period prior to the audiometric exam.

4.2 Audiometric testing must then be conducted annually and compared to the baseline to determine if a standard threshold shift (STS) has occurred. An STS is defined as an average shift or change in hearing threshold in either ear of 10 dB or more at 2,000, 3,000, and 4,000 Hz relative to the baseline audiogram. If an STS occurs:

* Retest to verify audiogram accuracy (recommended, but not required).
* Notify staff within 21 days from the time of determination of an STS.
* Refit and retrain staff on the use of hearing protection.

# 5. Training and information

Facility staff must be trained at least annually on the following:

* Effects of noise on hearing.
* Purpose, advantages, and disadvantages and attenuation of various types of hearing protection.
* Proper use and care of hearing protection.
* Purpose and procedures of audiometric testing (see [OSHA noise standard](https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.95) for additional information).

# 6. Recordkeeping

The following records must be maintained for the designated time period by the County HR or the Hearing Conservation designated staff:

* Noise monitoring records (2 years).
* Audiometric testing results, if received (duration of employment).
* Audiometric test letters (duration of employment).
* Training records (minimum of 3 years).

**Attachment A**

Hearing Protection Notice

## Post the following information at facility.

Hearing protection must be worn during the following operations and/or locations:

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►

►