

Hearing Conservation

POLICY

University units are responsible for minimizing employee exposure to hazardous noise levels.

Exposure Threshold

Since exposure to noise that equals or exceeds the 85 decibel (A weighted or dBA) 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) threshold is potentially hazardous to hearing, University units must limit employee noise exposure to levels below this threshold.

Exposed Employees

Each employee exposed to an 8-hour TWA occupational noise of 85 decibels (dBA) or greater, without regard to the use of hearing protection, is to be provided a hearing protection device, annual audiometric testing, and annual training. (*WAC 296-817-20015*)

Controls/Hearing Protection

Occupational noise exposures above 85 decibels 8-hour TWA are to be reduced using engineering and/or administrative controls. Where these controls are not feasible or insufficient, hearing protection is to be supplied to and worn by each affected employee.

Protection Requirements

Each affected employee must wear hearing protection in any of the following cases:

- Occupational noise exposures exceed 85 decibels 8-hour TWA
- Noise exceeds 115 decibels
- Impulse or impact noise meets or exceeds 140 decibels

Warning Signs

University units must post warning signs indicating "Hearing Protection Required" at entrances to areas where noise may exceed 115 decibels.

RESPONSIBILITY

Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for the following:

- Ensuring that employees receive and wear appropriate hearing protection when noise exposure exceeds the hearing threshold defined above.
- Requesting noise assessments from Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) when appropriate.
- Requesting additional noise monitoring when processes or procedures change that affect noise levels.

Hearing Conservation

Employees

Employees are responsible for the following:

- Wearing appropriate hearing protection when noise exposure exceeds the hearing threshold defined above.
- Using hearing protection as directed by the supervisor.
- Maintaining hearing protection equipment in good condition.
- Requesting additional noise monitoring when processes or procedures change that affect noise levels.

HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

EH&S is responsible for managing the hearing conservation program; and coordinates noise monitoring, audiometric testing and training.

Direct questions regarding the hearing conservation program to the applicable campus EH&S:

- WSU Pullman EH&S: telephone 509-335-3041
- WSU Spokane EH&S: telephone 509-358-7621

WSU Spokane EH&S also provides information and assistance to WSU Health Sciences—Yakima (which includes College of Nursing—Yakima and College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences—Yakima).

- WSU Tri-Cities EH&S: telephone 509-372-7163
- WSU Vancouver EH&S: telephone 360-546-9706

Personnel at WSU locations not listed above may contact WSU Pullman EH&S for assistance.

Full Program

A copy of the full written program is available from EH&S.

Noise Monitoring

Contact EH&S for noise exposure assessment if employees must raise their voices to be heard two feet away.

Audiometric Testing

All employees covered by the hearing conservation program are required to have annual audiometric testing, which is arranged by EH&S. Supervisors are responsible for providing EH&S with a list of affected employees who are eligible.

Training

Employees covered by the hearing conservation program (i.e., those who work in locations where noise exposure exceeds the exposure threshold) receive training.

Hearing Conservation

Annual Training

Each covered employee must receive annual training, which is arranged by EH&S. Annual training includes the following topics:

- Effects of noise on hearing
- Use of hearing protection
- Purpose of audiometric testing
- Access to records

Orientation

During employee orientation, the supervisor is to provide each covered employee with initial training regarding the use of and need for hearing protection.

Posting Requirements

Each department with employees in the hearing conservation program must post a copy of the hearing regulation (*WAC* 296-817-20015) on the safety bulletin board. Obtain copies of the hearing regulation from EH&S or print copies from the *WAC* website.