

# OREGON STATE HOSPITAL

PORTLAND – SALEM

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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**SECTION 8:** Safety, Security, Emergency Management    **POLICY: 8.010**

**SUBJECT:** Hearing Conservation Program

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**POINT PERSON:** ROBERT COX  
SAFETY MANAGER

**APPROVED:** GREGORY P. ROBERTS  
SUPERINTENDENT



**DATE:** JANUARY 4, 2012

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### I. POLICY

The Oregon State Hospital (OSH) Safety Office shall administer a continuing Hearing Conservation Program designed to protect employees who become exposed to noise levels of 85 dBA or greater. The program shall include:

- A. Periodic inspection of equipment and work areas to identify any changes in noise levels and ensure that proper safeguards are utilized.
- B. Identification of employees for inclusion in the program.
- C. Maintenance of accurate exposure measurement records.
- D. Annual audiometric testing for all employees who are enrolled in the program.
- E. Annual training for all employees enrolled in the program.
- F. Proper hearing protectors and other controls.

### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Decibel - dB" means the unit of measure of sound intensity or loudness based on a logarithmic scale.
- B. "Standard Threshold Shift" means a change in the hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dB or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz in either ear.

- C. "TWA - Time Weighted Average" means the average noise level exposure over an eight-hour (8) workday.

### III. PROCEDURES

#### Monitoring

- A. When it is determined by the Supervisor or Safety Officer that an employee's noise exposure may exceed a TWA of 85 dB, monitoring, in accordance with OAR 437, Division 1910.95, shall be coordinated or conducted by the Safety Officer. Examples of OSH equipment noise levels are: riding lawnmowers – 86-94 dB; backhoe - 91 dB; leaf blower – 96-98 dB; re-therm units – 57-65 dB.
1. The dB monitoring shall be repeated whenever a change in equipment or environment causes the noise level to increase, exposing any employee to noise levels suspected of exceeding the TWA of 85 dB.;
  2. Records of monitoring shall be kept for a minimum of two (2) years in the Safety Office.
  3. Employees exposed to an eight-hour (8) TWA of 85 dB or greater shall be notified by the Safety Officer.
  4. Affected employees or their representative shall be given the opportunity to observe any noise measurements conducted.

#### Audiometric Testing

- A. When employees are exposed to a TWA of 85 dB or more, then the following must be performed:
1. Annual audiometric testing for all exposed employees shall be required. Any new employee shall be audiometric tested within thirty (30) days of hire. All testing shall be at no cost to employees.
  2. Audiograms must be reviewed by a state certified industrial audiometric technician and repeated annually.
  3. Audiograms which reveal hearing loss at levels as defined in the regulations shall be counseled on further action.
  4. Employees must be notified of a hearing loss in writing within twenty-one (21) calendar days of such determination.

5. Employees have the legal right to review their audiometric records.
6. Records of audiometric tests must be retained in the OSH Safety Office for the duration of employment, plus thirty (30) years.

#### Hearing Protection

- A. Hearing protection shall be made available to any employee exposed to noise at or above 85 dB. The use of hearing protection is mandatory for employees who have experienced a standard threshold shift who are exposed to 85 dB or more, and for all employees exposed to a TWA of 90 dB or more.
- B. The hospital shall provide a choice of hearing protectors with a NRR (Noise Reduction Rating) that shall reduce the noise to 90 dB or below for employees with a standard threshold shift.
- C. The hearing protection selected must reduce noise exposure to 90 dB or less or, for employees with a standard threshold shift, to 85 dB or less.
- D. When the noise level is above a TWA of 90 dB the hospital shall research and consider engineering or administrative controls to reduce noise levels to 90 dB or below.

#### Training

- A. The Safety Officer shall ensure a Certified Audiology Technician annually provides training for all employees exposed to a TWA of 85 dB or more. Supervisors of affected employees shall ensure attendance at a scheduled session or an approved alternative. The training must include:
  1. Effects of noise on hearing;
  2. Purpose and explanation of audiometric testing; and
  3. Fitting and proper wearing of hearing protectors and types available.
- B. A copy of OAR 437, Div. 2G, 1910.95 "Occupational Noise Exposure" shall remain posted in areas where the noise level may be perceived by employees as approaching a TWA of 85 dB.
- C. Compliance with this policy and the health and safety regulations are important to reduce employee exposure to hearing loss. Employees are expected to wear protection when required and maintain appointments for

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**SUBJECT:** Hearing Conservation Program

**POLICY NUMBER 8.010**

**DATE:** January 4, 2012

**PAGE 4 OF 4**

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testing. Employees found not in compliance with this policy are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with hospital policy on progressive discipline.

#### **IV. REFERENCES**

OAR 437, Subdivision 2G, 1910.95 "Occupational Noise Exposure"  
29 CFR, 1910.95, "Occupational Noise Exposure"

Replaces Oregon State Hospital Policy and Procedure 8.010, *Hearing Conservation Program*, dated 10/17/2006.