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*Occupational Safety & Health Environmental Health Laboratory Safety Industrial  
Hygiene Radiation Safety Hazardous Waste Pollution Prevention*

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# Hearing Conservation Program

Administered by

**Environmental Health and Safety Office**

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The Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator shall provide training in the use and care of hearing protectors to employees. Supervisors should periodically evaluate their employees to ensure hearing protectors are being worn and maintained properly.

Hearing protectors shall reduce an employee's noise exposure below an 8-hour TWA of 90 dB. For employees who have experienced a STS, hearing protectors shall reduce their exposure below an 8-hour TWA of 85 dB. The adequacy of hearing protector attenuation shall be re-evaluated whenever employee noise exposure increases to the extent that the hearing protectors provided may no longer provide adequate attenuation. Hearing protectors that provide insufficient attenuation must either be replaced with a protector with a higher attenuation or supplemented with engineering controls.

The attenuation provided by hearing protectors shall be calculated by subtracting seven from the protector's noise reduction rating (NRR).

## **VI. Audiometric Testing**

Audiometric testing shall be provided at no cost to employees whose exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour TWA of 85 dB. The University's contracted occupational health care provider shall conduct the testing in accordance with VOSH 1910.95 (h). Employees shall receive a baseline audiogram within six months of their first exposure at or above 85 dB and annually thereafter.

The health care provider shall evaluate annual audiograms to determine that the audiograms are valid and if a STS has occurred. Additionally, the health care provider shall determine when an annual audiogram may be substituted for the baseline audiogram.

Employees who suffer a STS may be sent for a retest within 30 days and the results from the retest may be considered as their annual audiogram. The health care provider shall notify the Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator when an employee has suffered a STS, and the Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator shall in turn notify the employee within 21 days of the determination. Unless the health care provider determines that the STS is not work related or aggravated by occupational noise exposure, the following steps shall be taken when a STS occurs:

- Employees not using hearing protectors shall be fitted with hearing protectors, trained in their proper use and care, and required to use them.
- Employees already using hearing protectors shall be refitted and retrained in their proper use and care and shall be provided with hearing protectors that offer greater attenuation if necessary.
- Employees shall be referred for a clinical audiological evaluation or an otological examination, as appropriate, if additional testing is necessary or if it is suspected that a medical pathology of the ear is caused or aggravated by their use of hearing protectors.

If subsequent audiometric testing of an employee whose exposure to noise is less than an 8-hour TWA of 90 dB indicates that a STS is not persistent, the Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator shall inform the employee of the new audiometric interpretation and their use of hearing protectors may be discontinued.

## **VII. Training and Information**

The Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator shall conduct training for employees exposed to noise at or above an 8-hour (TWA) of 85 dB and to employees who have suffered a STS. Supervisors shall contact the Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator to arrange for training of their employees. Employees shall demonstrate understanding of the training by successfully completing a written test with a score of 70 percent or better. An employee who does not successfully complete the written test shall attend a personal training session that focuses on the aspects of the training not understood by the employee.

The training shall cover at minimum the following:

- The effects of noise on hearing
- The purpose of hearing protectors, the advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types, and instruction on selection, fitting, use and care
- The purpose of audiometric testing, and an explanation of the test procedures
- Employee responsibilities as they pertain to this program

The Hearing Conservation program Coordinator shall make copies of the VOSH standard 1910.95 and this program available to employees, their supervisors and their representatives. Supervisors shall post a copy of the standard in the workplace. A copy of the standard is in **Appendix B** of this program.

## **VIII. Recordkeeping**

The Hearing Conservation Program Coordinator shall maintain written information regarding employee exposure monitoring, audiometric tests and other related medical evaluations and training. The records shall be kept at the Environmental Health and Safety Office and shall be made available in a reasonable time, place and manner upon request from an employee, former employee, employee's representative or from the Assistant Secretary.

### **Employee Exposure Monitoring Records**

The following records shall be retained for at least two years:

- Employee noise exposure monitoring results
- Calibration Records for monitoring equipment

### **Audiometric Testing Records**

Audiometric testing records shall be retained indefinitely. Records obtained from an employee's previous employer shall also be retained indefinitely regardless of whether or not the employee was placed in this program during their period of employment at Old Dominion University.

Audiometric testing records shall include:

- Name, age, gender, social security number and job classification of employee
- Employees most recent noise exposure assessment
- Date and time of audiogram
- Name and credentials of audiometric technician
- Audiometer make, model, serial number, and date of last acoustic or exhaustive calibration
- Measurements of the background sound pressure levels in audiometric test rooms
- Name and credentials of CAOHC-certified technicians, audiologists or physicians that review audiograms
- Reviewer's follow-up recommendations
- Documentation of employee's written notification of STS

**Training Records:**

- Outline of annual training program content



## Appendix A

### Definitions

**Action Level:** The sound level of 85 dBA, based on an 8 hour time weighted average, at which when reached or exceeded necessitates implementation of activities to reduce the risk of noise-induced hearing loss.

**Audiogram:** A chart, graph, or table resulting from an audiometric test showing an individual's hearing threshold levels as a function of frequency.

**Audiologist:** A professional specializing in the study and rehabilitation of hearing, who is certified by the American Speech-Language-hearing Association or licensed by a state board of examiners.

**A -Weighted:** The A-weighting, expressed as dBA, is the scale used for most occupational noise measurements. The A-weighting approximates the range of human hearing as it filters out lower frequency noises, which are not as damaging as the higher frequencies.

**Baseline Audiogram:** The audiogram against which future audiograms are compared.



## Appendix B

### Occupational Noise Standard

Occupational Noise Exposure (1910.95): [Occupational noise exposure. - 1910.95](#)