

City of Portland

Hearing Conservation Policy

(3/24/21)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a program and procedures for employee hearing protection and conservation. It supports compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration 29 CFR 1910.95 Occupational Noise Exposure (linked as Appendix A) that provides requirements for personal protective equipment, housekeeping, training and a procedure for reporting exposures.

POLICY

The City of Portland will actively work to identify work environments and tasks that may expose employees to noise levels established as needing formal hearing conservation actions. These will include noise level monitoring and employee audiometric testing, noise control, provision of personal protective equipment, employee training, and record keeping.

RESPONSIBILITY

I. Administrator Responsibilities.

The Director of Occupational Health & Safety shall be the City of Portland's Hearing Conservation Program's Administrator (the "Administrator"). The Administrator is responsible for administering this policy, including the following:

- Issuing and administering this policy and making sure that the plan satisfies the requirements of all applicable federal, state and local hearing conservation regulations.
- Developing procedures for noise abatement and hearing conservation.
- Evaluating and updating the policy annually (12 month period)
- Coordinating the Monitoring Program where noise exposure is suspected.
- Coordinating the annual Audiometric Testing of applicable employees if needed.
- Coordination and supervision of record keeping.

II. Department Safety Officers and Trainers.

The Department Safety personnel will report to the Director of Occupational Health & Safety. They are specifically responsible for the following:

- Identifying which employees are likely to be exposed to noise levels above 85dBA.
- Assuring that employees are provided properly fitting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that they are trained on its proper use, care and when to replace.
- Maintaining a supply of replacement PPE.
- Maintaining medical records of exposure monitoring, training records and hearing exam records.
- Supervision of hearing protector selection.
- Supervision of employee training.
- Evaluating the noise level of new equipment and contractor operations that may impact employees.

III. Management Responsibilities.

Department Heads, supervisors, managers, coordinators, and similar positions are responsible for assuring compliance with this policy, and asking for clarification if they have questions.

IV. All Employee Responsibilities.

Employees are responsible for the following:

- Using PPE as directed.
- Participating in audiometric/hearing testing as required.
- Otherwise complying with this policy, and asking for clarification if they have questions.

PROCEDURES

I. Outline of Hearing Conservation Program

The City's Program consists of the following aspects:

- The *Monitoring Program* will be activated when it is suspected that an employee's exposure might exceed regulatory sound levels. The Monitoring Program is the process of testing sound levels in a work environment.
- Employees whose work environment exceeds regulatory sound levels will be required to participate in the *Audiometric Testing Program*, where the employee's hearing levels will be tested upon hire to obtain a baseline and then yearly to determine whether any hearing loss has occurred.

- Employees whose work environment exceeds regulatory sound levels will also be required to participate in the City's *Hearing Conservation Program*, including wearing PPE, and taking other precautions to preserve hearing.

II. Monitoring Program

When information indicates that any employee's noise exposure may reasonably equal or exceed 85 decibels, either on an 8-hour time weighted average or on a shorter duration basis, a Monitoring Program shall be implemented to measure noise exposure levels.

A qualified third party provider and/or a representative of the Maine Department of Labor may conduct the Monitoring Program. The Monitoring Program will use a sampling strategy designed to identify employees for inclusion in the Hearing Conservation Program and to enable the proper selection of hearing protectors. Where necessary or helpful, historic data (previous similar monitoring that was conducted) may be used for particular operations. Employees or employee representatives will have the opportunity to observe the monitoring in a manner that does not disrupt daily operations.

Monitoring shall be repeated whenever a change in production, process, equipment or controls increases noise exposures to the extent that additional employees may be exposed at or above the action level.

The results of all Monitoring will be recorded in Appendix B, regardless of whether the noise outcomes reach regulatory thresholds. Appendix B further indicates the Noise Reduction Rating for corresponding required PPE, as well as time duration limits.

III. Hearing Conservation

For all employees who have documented noise exposure at or above 85 dBA, as identified in Appendix B, the City will implement noise controls, provide protective hearing devices, and provide training, as required.

Noise Controls: The following controls will be utilized to reduce noise levels to the greatest extent possible:

- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that may include but not limited to disposable earmuffs and or plugs or a combination of both. PPE shall be sufficient to meet the NRR requirements in Appendix B.
- Utilization of temporary barriers or other approved noise-reducing materials.
- Job rotation and/or physical distancing from noise sources to meet durational limits as described in Appendix B.

Training: The Department Safety Officers and Trainers or a qualified third party individual will provide initial training on the proper use of PPE and other control measures to employees who are subject to this hearing conservation plan. In addition, the Safety Officers and Trainers must provide annual training to all employees exposed to noise at or above an eight-hour time weighted average of 85 dBA.

Training must include the effects of noise on hearing, information on hearing protection and their use, information on audiometric testing and its purpose, and review of this policy.

A written description of the training program shall be maintained. The attached training record will be included as part of this written program.

The Hearing Conservation Standard 29 CFR 1910.95, Appendix A will also be posted and/or available on the Department/City intranets for employee review.

IV. Audiometric Testing Program:

All employees with an eight-hour time weighted exposure of 85 dBA or above will be included in an Audiometric Testing Program. Appendix C lists job titles of individuals that this may include. Each Department Administrator will make the actual determination for each position based on its specific job functions.

Department management will ensure that all affected employees participate in the company Audiometric Testing Program that includes baseline audiogram testing as soon after orientation as reasonably possible but within 6 months of first exposure. Annual Audiometric testing will be conducted to compare to baselines and assess whether employee(s) have experienced measurable hearing loss. Exposure to noise will be minimized to the extent possible for 14 hours prior to obtaining this baseline exam and subsequent annual tests.

The City's preferred occupational health provider or a qualified third-party medical provider will perform annual Audiometric Testing, in accordance with ANSI S3.6-1969 and OSHA regulation 29 CFR 1910.95.

A copy of the most recent audiogram result will be provided to the employee as well as an explanation of the results.

If a standard threshold shift (an average shift in either ear of 10 dB or more at 2000, 3000, or 4000 Hz and hearing levels are greater than 25dB) is identified, then the Department will file a first report of injury and the employee will be referred for treatment.

Records: Audiometric test records need to contain the following information:

- name and job classification of employee

- Baseline audiograms
- date of audiogram
- examiner's name
- date of last calibration of the audiometer
- employee's most recent noise exposure assessment
- accurate records of the measurements of the background sound pressure levels in the audiometric test rooms if done onsite.

Records Retention: Audiometric test records will be retained for the duration of the affected workers' employment. Copies of records will be provided to employees upon their request.

POLICY VIOLATIONS

Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to discipline under the City's disciplinary policies, up to and including termination of employment. The prohibitions in this policy are intended to complement any conduct or performance restrictions provided in additional City and departmental policies and procedures.

Jon P. Jennings
City Manager

Date: 3/24/2021
Revision Dates:

Appendix A
Hearing Conservation Standard 29 CFR 1910.95

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.95>

Appendix B
Operations Assessed for Noise Level
Noise Levels for Common Equipment

The following table can be used to determine when employees must wear hearing protection.

- If an employee uses a piece of equipment that exceeds 90 decibels (dBA), regardless of duration, hearing protection must be worn.
- Employees who have experienced an occupationally related standard threshold shift in their hearing, must wear hearing protection if exposed to sound levels of 85 dBA or greater.
- Dual hearing protection shall be worn if exposures exceed 105 dBA.

The Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) needed for each piece of equipment is given. For equipment not listed, please contact The Safety Department at 207-874-8622 or any Safety Team member for an evaluation.

Noise Source at High Idle Without Load Tested Outside	Sound Level dBA	NRR* - 7 = 26	(NRR* - 7) / 2 = 13
DPW and PR&F			
City #8114 Holder watering setup outside cab 3 feet away	92	66	79
City #8114 Holder watering setup inside cab	79	53	66
City #8114 Holder watering setup outside cab at hose reel	84	58	71
Echo Blower handheld PB-2520	93	67	80
Stihl MS 201 T top handle Chainsaw	103	77	90
Stihl HS 45 Hedge Trimmer	97	71	84
Husqvarna Battery Chainsaw			
Echo Top Handle Chainsaw	103	77	90
Troy-bilt Pony 1150 Rototiller	89	63	76
Stihl BR 700 Backpack blower	106	80	93
Husqvarna 572 HP Chainsaw	109	83	96
Bandit Intimidator 12XP Wood Chipper at Clutch	104	78	91
Bandit Intimidator 12XP Wood Chipper at Feed Table	100	74	87
Speedaire Air Compressor	85	59	72
Stihl TS 420 Concrete Saw	105	79	92
Ventrac w/ air turbine			
Equipment Under Load			
Brick saw on the back of the truck			
Jack Hammer			
Ventrac w/ mulching deck	93		
Bandit Intimidator 12XP Wood Chipper at Feed			

Table			
Stihl TS 420 Concrete Saw cutting granite			
Lawn Mower Snapper? City #7019	96		
Toro Lawn Mower 16' City #7026	91		
PWM			
Trackless cabin with Buffalo blower or mower attachment	100	74	87
Terminal boiler room	90	64	77
On the apron near aircraft	90	64	77
Oshkosh broom cabin	95	69	82
* = Foam Ear Plugs => 33NRR			
Earmuff NRR			
Forestry Ear Muffs => 3M Peltor Optime 105 Earmuffs hard hat attached = Manufacturer 27 NRR			
Parks Earmuffs => 3M Worktunes Earmuffs = Manufacturer 24 NRR			
Horticulture Earmuffs			

Appendix C

Job Positions Considered for Audiometric Testing Program

The following is a list of positions that have been identified as potentially exposing employees to an eight-hour time weighted exposure of 85 dBA or above as a normal part of their job, therefore needing to be included in the Audiometric Testing Program. Each Department's Safety Officer will make the actual determination for each position based on its specific job functions.

- Maintenance Worker I
- Maintenance Worker II
- Maintenance Worker III
- Arborist I
- Arborist II
- Arborist III
- Police Officer/SWAT
- FireFighter Paramedic/SWAT