

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER



HEARING CONSERVATION
PROGRAM

2023

Introduction:..... 3

Purpose: 3

Application: 3

Definitions 3

Roles and Responsibility: 4

Procedure: 4

Training: 5

Record Retention:..... 6

Annual Compliance Review:..... 6

Revisions 7

Introduction:

The University of Texas at Tyler Environmental Health and Safety department has developed this Hearing Conservation Program to ensure a safe work environment and to protect the health and safety of University staff, students and any contractors or vendors working on University property. This program was written with guidance from OSHA guidelines, the University of Texas System Construction Safety Program, and on-site Job Hazards Analyses.

Purpose:

The purpose of the University's Hearing Conservation Program, herein referred to as the Plan is to ensure that University employees and students who perform activities at heights have the knowledge and tools to work safely.

Application:

This program applies to work performed by any UT Tyler employee, student, or contractor performing work on all campuses.

Definitions:**Action Level:**

The level of noise exposure at which:

- A person must be enrolled in the Hearing Conservation Program and must be provided audiometric testing.
- Representative noise exposure monitoring is required.
- Hearing protectors and training on noise hazards must be provided to the employee.

The current Action Level is 85 Weighted decibels (dBA) averaged over an eight-hour period.

Audiometric Testing: Testing conducted for measuring the sensitivity of a person's hearing threshold in decibels.

Decibel (dBA): The standard unit used to measure sound pressure level. The decibel scale is logarithmic, and every five dBA is a doubling of the sound pressure level.

Hertz (Hz): The unit of measure for noise frequency in cycles per second. (1 cycle/ second= 1Hz)

Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL): The maximum allowable noise exposure, established by Cal/OSHA as a legal limit. The current PEL for noise is 90 dBA averaged over an eight-hour period.

Noise Reduction Rating (NRR): A measure of the amount of noise reduction provided by a given hearing protection device.

Standard Threshold Shift (STS): A change in hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dBA or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz in either ear.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) has overall responsibility for the program administration including the training, evaluation, inspections, and audits. EHS conducts periodic audits of the workplace to ensure that this program is being effectively implemented. EHS has the final authority over all safety issues and may halt operations or practices it considers an imminent danger at any time.

1. Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) will: Monitor worksites for noise levels and inform employees, supervisors, and the Occupational Health Clinic at University Health Services of results. Recommend appropriate engineering and administrative noise control measures. Assist employees in selection of proper protection devices and provide instruction on their care and use. Based on noise monitoring, determine whether employees need to be enrolled in the campus Hearing Conservation Program. Provide training to campus departments on the Hearing Conservation Program, upon request. Periodically review and update the Hearing Conservation Program to be consistent with changes in protective equipment and work processes.
2. Employees, contractors, and students will: Wear approved hearing protection devices in posted noise hazard areas and during tasks identified with potential noise exposure greater than 85 weighted decibels (dBA). Maintain hearing protectors in sanitary condition and proper working order. Report noise hazards and hearing protector problems to the appropriate supervisor.

Procedure:

Exposure Monitoring

EH&S performs noise exposure monitoring of faculty, staff, and students who may be exposed to noise over Cal/OSHA's 85 dBA Action Level on an eight hour time-weighted average basis.

Personal or area noise monitoring is conducted to identify employees and students for inclusion in the Hearing Conservation Program and to enable the proper selection of hearing protectors. Area noise monitoring is also used to identify campus locations or specific equipment and activities where average noise levels exceed OSHA's 85 dBA Action Limit (AL). These are areas where hearing protection should always be worn, and signs should be posted to alert employees, students, and visitors to the required use of hearing protectors.

Employees or their supervisors should contact EH&S to schedule noise monitoring if they suspect exposures to excessive noise on the job, or if previously monitored noise levels may have changed due to modifications to equipment or processes. EH&S should also be contacted to schedule monitoring if the hearing protectors in use are suspected of being inadequate. If

desired, employees or their representatives may observe the noise monitoring procedure by arranging with EH&S prior to the date of the monitoring.

Persons whose noise exposures have been monitored will receive written notification of their exposure monitoring results from EH&S. Persons whose eight hour time-weighted average noise exposure exceeds the Action Level will be enrolled in the campus Hearing Conservation Program. These individuals should receive audiometric testing, will have hearing protectors made available to them by their supervisors, and will be provided training on the fitting, use, and care of these devices.

Persons whose eight hour time-weighted average noise exposure is less than 85 dBA will not be enrolled in the campus Hearing Conservation Program, and generally do not require audiometric testing, training, or the use of hearing protectors. Additional monitoring of their personal noise exposures should not be required unless a significant change is perceived in the workplace noise level.

Audiometric Testing

UT Tyler performs annual audiometric testing on all persons enrolled in the Hearing Conservation Program. The cost of the test must be covered by the employee's department and be provided free to the employee. Prior to significant work-related noise exposure, employees will establish a "baseline audiogram." Subsequent audiograms will be compared against this baseline. If it is determined that an employee has a Standard Threshold Shift, as defined above, he or she will be notified in writing within 21 days of STS determination. Such individuals will be retrained on the hazards and precautions of working in noisy environments and will be issued hearing protection devices if determined appropriate by EH&S. Other modifications to the workplace may also be needed to reduce noise exposures to prevent additional hearing loss.

Hearing Protectors

Campus departments must provide hearing protectors (earplugs or earmuffs) to each of their employees exposed at or above the 85 dBA Action Level. Hearing protectors must be provided free of cost to the wearer, and must be replaced when broken, defective, or unsanitary.

Training:

UT Tyler provides annual training for all persons enrolled in the Hearing Conservation Program. This training covers:

- The effects of noise on hearing,
- The purpose of hearing protectors; the advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types; and instructions on selection, fitting, use, and care of hearing protectors,
- The purpose of audiometric testing and an explanation of audiometric test procedures.

Additional training on noise hazards and their control is available upon request from EH&S.

Retraining:

When with Environmental Health and Safety, or the supervisor has reason to believe that any employee or student, who has already been trained, does not have the sufficient understanding and skills, retraining will occur.

Record Retention:

EH&S maintains records of all personal exposure monitoring and the UT Tyler Occupational Health Clinic maintains all audiometric testing records for persons enrolled in the Hearing Conservation Program. Exposure monitoring records are maintained for a minimum of two years, and audiometric test results are maintained for at least thirty years after the employee's last test. These records are available upon request to employees or designated employee representatives.

Annual Compliance Review

The Safety Organization will review the program annually to determine how the program can be improved. EH&S will strive to keep all programs up to date, with accurate information that employees, and outside contractors can rely on.

Revisions

Date	Author/Reviewer	Description/Reason for Change
6/1/2022	T. Bay/P. Tate	New policy
7/7/2023	T. Bay/K. Stapp	Review, Update logo & date