

SIX STEPS TO HELP CREATE A HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

1 CONDUCT A NOISE SURVEY

- Creating an effective hearing conservation program begins with a thorough noise survey.
- Identify high noise areas (exceeding OSHA requirements) that justify a hearing conservation program for employees.
- Determine appropriate hearing protection to reduce risks for all employees.



2 CONTROL THE SOURCE

- Hazardous noise can be reduced by controlling noise at the source or limiting the amount of time a person is working in the noise. (Duration and intensity of exposure)
- Examples of noise-reduction strategies include regular equipment maintenance, isolating workers from noise through soundproofing and noise damping, and upgrading to lower-noise tools and machinery.

3 PROTECT WITH PPE

- Hearing protection is effective only if wearing is mandatory, is comfortable, fits properly, and provides proper protection.
- Consider engaging employees to help find new solutions. If dirty hands are normal at your work site, consider providing ear muffs, a push-to-fit ear plug or banded devices that require no rolling with the fingertips. Also place ear plug dispensers at more convenient locations throughout a work site, and maybe by a hand washing station.
- If employees are regularly removing their hearing protectors to speak with co-workers, consider those with a built-in communication headset. While making the leap to higher-tech equipment may seem expensive, the benefits in protection and productivity can outweigh the financial risk. Combine hearing protection with hard-hats or another required PPE.



SIX STEPS TO HELP CREATE A HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

4 PROVIDE TESTING

- Workers who are exposed to hazardous noise, even if they are using hearing protection, must be routinely tested to make sure they are not losing hearing due to noise in the workplace. OSHA requires a baseline audiometric (hearing) test followed by annual checks. Changes in hearing are tracked over time. Employers are required to investigate and follow up on standard threshold shifts (STS) of 10db or more in either ear from an employee's baseline test. Find more information at <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.95>

5 TRAINING PROGRAM

- Employers must train employees exposed to 85 dB and above at least annually in the effects of noise; the purpose, advantages and disadvantages of various types of hearing protectors; the selection, fit and care of protectors; and the purpose and procedures of audiometric testing.
- Take the extra step to educate your workers about protecting their hearing outside of work by offering them hearing protection to take home. Remind workers to continue using hearing protection when doing such noisy activities as lawn mowing, leaf blowing, hammering, target shooting, hunting or using a shop vac. Keep the volume at an enjoyable but safe level when listening to music.



6 DOCUMENT & RECORD

- Accurate and up-to-date records of all aspects of the company's hearing conservation program are required. Good records can help managers make good business decisions about how to run a hearing conservation program effectively and meet regulatory requirements.