



Purpose

Environmental Health and Safety shall ensure that no employee is subjected to noise that produces sound levels in excess of those established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) without approved hearing protection.

Noises that produce sound levels at or greater than 85 decibels can cause hearing loss and damage to the inner ear.

Applicability

This policy, and all the requirements and related programs stated within, apply to all University of Chicago employees.

This policy is especially applicable to employees that work in environments where noises that produce sound levels at or greater than 85 decibels are known to be present.

Control Measures

Control Hierarchy: When employees are subjected to sound exceeding 85 dB, feasible engineering and administrative controls shall be utilized as the first step in noise control. If these controls fail to reduce sound to acceptable levels, hearing protection devices shall be used. During the implementation of administrative and/or engineering controls, affected employees shall be provided with hearing protection devices and trained in accordance with this program.

Administrative Controls: Administrative controls normally involve a change in work schedules or operations which reduce noise exposures. Examples include operating a noisy machine on the second or third shift when fewer people are exposed or shifting an employee to a less noisy job once a hazardous daily noise dose has been reached.

Engineering Controls: Engineering controls shall be used when any modification or replacement of equipment, or related physical change at the noise source or along the transmission path can be altered which reduces the noise level to the employee's ear. Some examples include, but are not limited to: Reducing noise at the source; Interrupting the noise path; Reducing reverberation; Employee/equipment isolation; and Equipment/process substitution.

Hearing Protection Devices: Hearing protection devices shall be made available to all employees exposed to an 8-hour TWA of 85 dB or greater at no cost to the employees. Hearing protection devices shall be replaced as necessary.

Hearing protection devices shall be worn by employees required to wear personal protective equipment and by any employee who is exposed to an 8-hour TWA of 85 dB or greater, and who has not yet had a baseline audiogram or has experienced a standard threshold shift.

Additional Information

Audiometric Evaluations

Audiometric evaluations shall be made available at no cost to all University employees whose exposure equals or exceeds an 8-hour TWA of 85 dB.

Baseline audiograms shall be obtained within six months of an employee's first measured exposure at or above the action level to compare subsequent audiograms, which should occur annually.

Training

Employees who are exposed to noise at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 dB shall receive training on the following:

Effects of noise on hearing; Purpose of hearing protection devices; Advantages and disadvantages of hearing protection devices; Attenuation of various types of hearing protection devices; Instructions on selection, fitting, use, and care of hearing protection devices; and The purpose of audiometric testing including an explanation of the test procedure.

Annual training for all employees included in the University's Hearing Conservation Program can be completed online through the University's Chalk website.