

<b>CITY OF APPLETON PERSONNEL POLICY</b>	<b>TITLE: HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM OSHA 29 CFR 1910.95</b>	
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**I PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate or minimize employee exposure to occupational noise and to prevent the occurrence of work-related hearing loss. The administration of this program will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Department as well as supervisory staff and the safety coordinators at each applicable city department/division.

~~The purpose of this policy is to prevent hearing loss and comply with OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.95 "Occupational Noise Exposure," Hearing Conservation Amendment.~~

**II POLICY:**

The City of Appleton is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all our employees. In addition, the City of Appleton will comply with OSHA's Standards 29 CFR 1910.95 and 29 CFR 1904.10, as incorporated by reference in SPS 332.15 for Public Employee Safety and Health. Violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. ~~The administration of the program will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Department as well as the supervisors and staff/safety coordinator at each major department/division.~~

**III DISCUSSION:**

This policy outlines the regulations, testing and training requirements mandated by OSHA 29 CFR.1910.95, 29 CFR 1904.10 and SPS332.50 and addresses how the City will administer its hearing conservation program.

**IV DEFINITIONS:**

Standard threshold shift (STS) – an average shift of 10 decibels or more at 2000, 3000, 4000 Hz.  
OSHA – Occupational Safety and Health Association  
ANSI – American National Standards Institute  
DSPS – Department of Safety and Professional Services

## V PROCEDURES

A. The Human Resources Department will **conduct or** coordinate the following:

1. Yearly **hearing audiometric** tests for all employees identified as being in the field a major portion of their working day or employees who are exposed to an eight-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels or greater noise level. (Fire Department Operations employees will complete annual tests as part of the annual NFPA physicals.)
2. Record-keeping: **maintaining noise exposure monitoring, OSHA 300 log, audiometric testing and training records.**
3. **Monitoring workplace noise levels to determine employee's risk exposure to noise.**
4. Identify employees to be included in this hearing conservation program.
- ~~3. Evaluating the program on a yearly basis.~~
  - ~~a. Coordination of and supervision of noise exposure monitoring.~~
  - ~~b. Identify employees to be included in the Hearing Conservation Program.~~
5. **Coordination of annual employee training.**
6. **Reviewing the effectiveness of the hearing conservation program and making sure that it satisfies the requirements of all applicable federal, state or local hearing conservation requirements.**

B. Departments will be responsible for the following:

1. **Providing a variety of suitable hearing protection that will reduce an employee's noise exposure at least to an 8-hour time-weighted average of 90 decibels. For employees who have experienced a standard threshold shift, hearing protection must reduce the employee's noise exposure to an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or below. - Ordering and selecting at least three different kinds of hearing protection.**
2. Development of departmental policies relating to the use of hearing protection, **as needed.**
3. ~~Providing employee training programs annually.~~ **Ensuring applicable employees are provided with and complete annual hearing conservation training.**
4. **Encourages and monitors their respective employees to complete the annual audiometric tests.**
5. ~~Where and~~ **Whenever possible, using engineering (e.g., sound barriers, etc.) and administrative controls (e.g., job rotation, etc.) to reduce noise exposures.**

6. Promote the use of hearing protection by setting a good example.

C. Employees are responsible for the following aspects of the hearing conservation program:

1. Properly wearing hearing protection in work areas requiring it.
2. Properly care for hearing protection, including routine care and cleaning, storage and replacement.
3. Participate in annual hearing conservation training and audiometric testing (both baseline and annual testing – see the section on audiometric testing for more information).

DE. The following guidelines have been established to ensure hearing protection for all City employees.

1. Noise Level ~~Readings~~ Monitoring – ~~Readings~~ Monitoring will be conducted:
  - a. When requested by an employee,
  - b. When requested by a department supervisor or safety representative,
  - c. When new equipment or processes is purchased/implemented in an area not previously requiring hearing protection or
  - d. When a hearing test audiometric tests detects a significant loss in a group of employees within the same work area/work group.
2. Individuals who are familiar with the testing equipment will conduct the monitoring. Noise exposure monitoring will be conducted using either of the following methods:
  - a. Area monitoring: Measuring the noise level in an area by use of a sound-level meter.
  - b. Personal monitoring: Measuring an employee's noise exposure by use of a dosimeter. A dosimeter is worn by an employee to evaluate noise levels that the employee is exposed to when doing their job.
3. The results of the monitoring will be kept in the Human Resources Department.
4. Affected employees or their representatives shall be provided with an opportunity to observe any noise monitoring.

ED. Audiometric Testing:

1. The purpose of audiometric testing is to figure out each employee's hearing threshold by determining the employee's response to noise at several frequencies. The initial audiogram (which is normally completed during an employee's pre-employment test) will be used as a baseline measurement to which all subsequent audiograms will be compared. Audiometric tests shall be performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist, or other physician or by a technician who is certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation. The following permanent City employees will receive a baseline and an annual audiometric test:

- All Fire Personnel (excluding clerical)
- All Police Officers
- Public Works (all field personnel)
- Environmentalists, Weights and Measures
- Valley Transit Mechanics and Service Person
- Water Plant personnel (excluding clerical)
- Waste Water personnel (excluding clerical)
- ~~Facilities Grounds and Construction Management personnel~~ PRFM Personnel (excluding recreation and clerical staff)

2. Employees will have the opportunity to be tested during regular work hours. The test will be provided at no cost to the employee. ~~Employees who fail to attend a scheduled appointment in the mobile unit will be sent to ThedaCare At Work and the cost of this visit will be paid by their department.~~

3. Both OSHA and WI DSHS require that baseline audiograms be provided to all applicable employees within 6 months of their first occupational noise exposure at or above OSHA's action level (8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels). During the 14 hours prior to an employee's baseline audiogram test, employees should refrain from any noisy work or non-work exposures. Hearing protection may be worn as a substitute to this requirement to limit an employee's noise exposure.

4. The annual audiogram will be compared to the baseline audiogram to determine if the audiogram is valid and if a standard threshold shift (STS) has occurred. An STS is defined as the average hearing loss of 10 decibels or more at the tested frequencies of 2,000, 3000 and 4,000 Hertz in either ear. If an audiogram shows and employee has a STS, the person will be retested within 30 days to determine if the shift is persistent. The following steps will be taken if a comparison of the baseline audiogram indicates a persistent standard threshold shift:

- a. Employees not using hearing protection will be trained, fitted, and required to use hearing protection per city policy.
- b. Employees already using hearing protectors will be retrained, refitted, required to use hearing protectors and if necessary, provided with hearing protection which offers greater attenuation (noise reduction rating).
- c. Written notification of the permanent STS will be given to the employee within 21 days.
- d. The employee will be counseled on the need to use hearing protection and provided further clinical evaluation if necessary.
- e. The employee's standard threshold shift will be recorded on the city's OSHA 300 log as required under OSHA 29 CFR 1904.10.

~~3. Personnel certified in hearing conservation and testing will conduct audiometer testing and training. Testing will be conducted with equipment that meets the specifications of ANSI S3.6-1969 and OSHA. The technician will be responsible to a physician.~~

~~4. Tests will be pure tone, air conduction, hearing threshold examinations at test frequencies of 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000 and 6000 Hz. Each ear will be tested separately.~~

~~5. The functional operation of the audiometer will be checked by biological calibration prior to~~

each day's use. An acoustic check will be performed if the biological calibration indicated deviations of 10 dB or greater, and an exhaustive calibration will be performed if the biological calibration indicated deviations of 15 dB or greater.

6. If an STS (an average shift in either ear of 10dB or more at 2000, 3000 and 4000 Hz) is identified:
  - a. The employee will be notified in writing.
  - b. The use of hearing protection will be mandatory and this shall be enforced.
  - c. The employee will be refitted and retrained in the use of hearing protection.

**FE.** Hearing Protection:

1. The City shall make hearing protection available to all employees exposed to an eight-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels or greater and for those who work in the field. Hearing protection will be provided at no cost to the employee.
2. Employees will be able to select their hearing protection from a variety of suitable hearing protectors. Hearing protection provided must be able to reduce an exposure's noise exposure to at least a 90-decibel average over 8 hours. For employees who have an experienced a standard threshold shift, hearing protectors must attenuate employee exposure to an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels or below. ~~(Per law at least three different types of hearing protection must be available.)~~ Hearing protection will be available in an accessible place at all times.
3. ~~The supervisor/safety coordinator at each major department/division shall ensure that hearing protection is worn by any employee who is exposed to an eight hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels or greater.~~ The use of hearing protection will be required for employees who have not yet had a baseline audiogram, who have experienced a standard threshold shift, or whose exposures exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels.

**GF.** Employee Training

1. ~~Personnel certified in hearing conservation and testing as well as departmental supervisors and the City Safety Coordinator will conduct annual training for employees who are tested yearly.~~ Employees included in the hearing conservation program will receive annual training. Information covered in this training will include: the effects of noise on hearing, the role of engineering and administrative controls in hearing conservation, the purpose and the use of hearing protectors, the advantages and the disadvantages of various hearing protection types, instructions in the selection, fitting, use and care of hearing protectors, the purpose of noise exposure monitoring and audiometric testing and an explanation of these test procedures.

**HG.** Record Keeping

1. Audiogram tests records will be retained in the employee medical file for the duration of a worker's employment. At the time of separation, the medical file will be kept for an additional 30 years.
2. Noise exposure monitor results will be maintained by the Human Resources Department for a minimum of 2 years.

3. All records required by this section shall be provided upon request to employees and former employees or representatives designated by the individual employee.