



County of Henrico
Office of Emergency Management
And Workplace Safety

Verification	Originator	Revised	Issued
Initials	EMWS	EMWS	EMWS
Date	05/01/2015	08/02/2017	08/01/2019

Safety Manual
Chapter 19 Hearing Conservation

Area of Application:	County of Henrico General Government & Schools
Document Location:	http://employees.henrico.us/info/safety-manual/
Revisions:	
Rev. No.	Date Description
001	08/04/17 Hearing Conservation Program template added.
002	

Purpose:

County of Henrico employees whose occupational noise exposure level equals or exceeds 85 dBA as an eight-hour time weighted average (TWA) are required by the Virginia Occupational Safety & Health (VOSH) Standard, 29 CFR 1910.95, to participate in a comprehensive Hearing Conservation Program.

Scope:

This chapter outlines the requirements of the standard and how best to protect County of Henrico employees who may be exposed to excessive noise levels. Whenever possible, occupational safety & health standards recommend that engineering controls, such as vibration minimizers and acoustical absorptive materials, are installed to maintain noise levels below the TWA of 85 dBA. If this is not feasible, a comprehensive Hearing Conservation Program must be implemented in the affected locations.

Program Administration:

Although VOSH does not require a *written* program, a Hearing Conservation Program template is available on the County of Henrico web page on the Employee Portal under “safety” for ease of compliance. This chapter provides an overview of the Hearing Conservation Standard and provides awareness for all county employees who work in high noise areas.

NOTE: At the current time, the majority of County of Henrico work locations do not exceed the eight-hour 85 dBA TWA that would require the implementation of a full Hearing Conservation Program. For departments with noise levels at or near the threshold, a hearing conservation program would be required or recommended. Additionally, hearing protection shall be worn by employees, contractors, visitors and guests upon entering the area(s) designated as high noise until exiting the area(s) regardless of duration. Affected departments shall ensure these high noise level locations have appropriate signage posted that indicate where hearing protectors are required.

The following sections are provided for informational purposes only. For departments where noise levels have changed, or are anticipated to change, contact the Office of Emergency Management and Workplace Safety (EMWS) for guidance regarding whether or not a full Hearing Conservation Program must be implemented for their employees.

Exposure Monitoring:

- A. For Departments with noise level concerns, a qualified contractor or competent person will perform initial monitoring in work areas to determine whether the noise levels meet or exceed the



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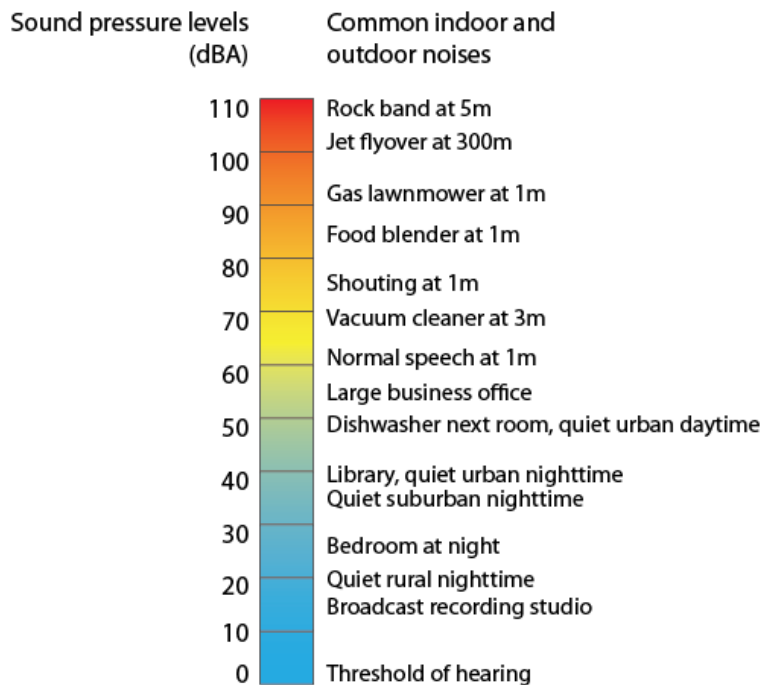
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8-hour TWA exposure limit of 85 dBA is the work area. Monitoring will be done using either a personal noise dosimeter or a sound level meter.

- B. Departments will provide the Office of EMWS with a copy of all noise monitoring results. Whenever the action level is met, the Hearing Conservation Program shall be implemented if engineering controls are not feasible.
- C. All affected employees are entitled to observe monitoring procedures and will be notified of the results.
- D. Re-monitoring will be required whenever workers' changes in exposures are sufficient to require new hearing protection or whenever new employees not previously in the program are added.

Typical Sound Levels of Familiar Activities



Note: "m" = "meter"

Procedures:

The following procedures summarize the Hearing Conservation Program, and are provided for informational purposes only. Departments should refer to the Hearing Conservation Program template if noise sampling determines the Program needs to be implemented. If assistance is needed, contact EMWS at 501-5661.

- A. Departments

Each affected department shall:



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1. Provide initial and annual audiometric testing for all affected employees,
2. Maintain hearing records for duration of a worker's employment, plus 30 years,
3. Post noise levels records by area and job description,
4. Audit the record keeping,
5. Monitor noise levels periodically to maintain the requirements of the Program,
6. Notify EMWS of any changes to machinery, work processes, the environment, or job descriptions.
7. Ensure affected employees wear appropriate hearing protectors in mandatory areas.

B. Location/Area/Monitoring

Workplace monitoring is performed:

1. Whenever noise levels in a work area or near equipment must be initially determined,
2. Whenever changes in production, processes, or controls may have increased noise levels so that the Program must be implemented in a work area where it was not required previously.

C. Employee Monitoring / New Hires

1. Employees and new hires will receive certified audiometric testing that is performed by, or contracted through, Employee Health Services.
2. Audiometric testing will be provided at no cost to the employee.
3. Initial testing to establish a baseline record for each employee will be performed within six (6) months of the hire date.

D. Employee Monitoring / Ongoing

1. Each affected employee will have an audiometric exam provided annually.
2. The County shall provide hearing protectors at no cost to the employee.
3. Assorted hearing protectors will be provided to affected employees so that they may choose the personal protective equipment that is most comfortable for them.

Training:

- A. It will be the responsibility of each affected department and Employee Health Services to ensure that affected employees are informed of the following:
 1. The effects of noise levels on hearing.
 2. The purpose, advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation characteristics of various types of hearing protectors.
 3. The selection, fitting and care of protectors.
 4. The purpose and procedures of audiometric testing.
- B. Employees will be supplied with literature/informational material outlining the purpose of hearing conservation prior to his/her audiometric exam, and allowing employees to ask questions at the time of testing.
- C. Each department will post warning signs in affected areas and a copy of the Current VOSH Standard for hearing conservation

Recordkeeping:

- A. Noise exposure records for any affected locations will be maintained by affected Departments. If assistance is needed regarding recordkeeping requirements, contact EMWS.



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- B. Audiometric test records will be filed and maintained by Employee Health Services. Audiometric test records will include at a minimum the name and job classification of the employee, the date the test was performed, the test technician's name, the date of acoustic or exhaustive calibration, measurement of the background sound pressure levels in the audiometric test booth and the employee's most recent noise exposure measurement.

Enforcement of this Policy:

Whenever any location, area or job description has been identified as being one where a "Hearing Protection Required" notice is posted, it shall be the responsibility of Department Heads and Supervisors to ensure all employees and other affected personnel comply with this directive. Disciplinary action shall be administered to those who do not.

Contractors and Visitors:

- A. If applicable, contractors hired by the County shall comply with the Hearing Conservation Program or any other County directive in place in the designated work areas. The County of Henrico will not provide hearing protection to contractors or a contractor's employees. It shall be the responsibility of contractors to provide all appropriate hearing protectors.
- B. All visitors shall comply with this chapter. The County will furnish complimentary ear plugs to any visitor who does not have hearing protectors.

Disclaimer:

Although every effort has been made to ensure this Chapter addresses all applicable regulations, it is the responsibility of each department to maintain compliance.