

Hearing Conservation Program

University of South Carolina Lancaster

I. Purpose

It is the policy of USC Lancaster to protect its employees from the hazards of excessive noise exposure on the job. USC Lancaster, through the USC Safety Program Guide, Section C.4, has instituted a Hearing Conservation Program to ensure compliance with the OSHA standards regarding occupational noise exposure (29 CFR 1910. 95, 29 CFR 1926. 52). The general objectives of this policy are as follows:

- A. To identify a population of noise "exposed" employees, i.e., those whose typical exposure to workplace noise equals or exceeds the action level as set by OSHA, or a level equivalent to a continuous 8-hour exposure to 85 dB(A). These employees are enrolled in the Hearing Conservation Program.
- B. To identify and demarcate work areas in which the sound level is sufficiently high to contribute substantially to an exposure at the level described above
- C. To reduce workplace exposure to noise through the use of hearing protection devices (ear plugs or ear muffs).
- D. To assess annually the hearing acuity of "exposed" employees, in order to detect very early noise-induced hearing loss, so that the progressive loss can be halted
- E. To ensure that all "exposed" employees are trained in the effects of excess noise on human hearing, and that each employee is informed on the correct use of hearing protection devices

II. Policy and Procedure

A. Administration of Program

Heyward Lucas, Director of Grounds Maintenance and Custodial Services, is responsible for administering this program at USC Lancaster.

B. Use of Engineering Controls

Where employee noise exposure exceeds the OSHA Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) of 90 dB(A) on an eight hour time-weighted average, engineering or administrative controls will be used to reduce exposure. If such controls are not feasible, hearing protection devices (HPDs) will be provided and used to reduce exposures to below 90 dB(A).

C. Inclusion of Employees Into This Program

Employees exposed to noise levels equal to or exceeding an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 dB(A) will be included in the Hearing Conservation Program. Appendix A contains a list of employees currently in the Hearing Conservation Program.

D. Noise Monitoring

Noise measurements will be conducted to determine employee exposure to noise, and to identify those work areas and/or equipment that could contribute to noise exposure.

USC EHS and USC Lancaster will maintain exposure and noise measurement records.

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E. Labeling of Areas/Equipment

All areas with noise levels exceeding 85 dB(A) will be labeled thus to warn employees and visitors entering of the need for hearing protection:



Stationary sources exceeding 85 dB(A) which are activated periodically, such as table saws, will have the following label affixed:



Small, mobile high noise sources (exceeding 85 dB(A) such as weed trimmers and circular saws will be affixed with small stickers that warn the user to ear hearing protection.

An inventory of high noise areas and equipment can be found in Appendix B.

F. Audiometric Testing

All employees assigned to jobs that require inclusion in the Hearing Conservation Program will receive a baseline audiogram within six (6) months of the first high noise exposure.

Audiograms will then be given at least annually and compared to the baseline audiogram to determine if a standard threshold shift (STS) has occurred. An STS is defined as a change in the hearing threshold of an average of 10 dB or more in either ear, measured at 2000, 3000 and 4000 Hz.

If an STS occurs, the affected employee will be notified.

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Employees must have a termination audiogram upon leaving USC Lancaster.

USC-Lancaster or Occupational Health will keep all audiogram records on file.

G. Hearing Protection

Hearing protection will be worn:

1. By all employees with noise exposures exceeding an eight hour time weighted average (TWA) of 90 dB(A).
2. When employees operate equipment that produces noise exceeding 85 dB(A)
3. When employees or visitors enter areas where the noise level exceeds 85 dB(A)

Hearing protection devices will provide adequate attenuation as to reduce exposures to below 85 dB(A).

H. Training

All employees in the Hearing Conservation Program will receive training annually. This training will cover (1) effects of noise on hearing (2) purpose of hearing protection (3) types of hearing protection (4) selection, use, fitting and care of hearing protectors (5) purpose and procedures for audiometric testing.

Training is provided through any one or a combination of the following modes:

1. Stand-up presentations by EHS staff
2. Video-based training
3. Online, text-based training through the EHS website

Appendix C contains training records for USC-Lancaster employees in the Hearing Conservation Program.

III. Specific Responsibilities

A. USC Lancaster

- Notify EHS when new noise sources are introduced
- Minimize noise through use of engineering controls
- Offer a variety of hearing protectors
- Work with the Industrial Hygienist and Occupational Nurse (EHS) to ensure workers receive training and audiograms
- Administer and maintain this program

B. Supervisors

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- Ensure workers use hearing protection when required

C. USC Environmental Health and Safety

- Conduct noise monitoring and notify affected employees of their exposure
- Provide training services
- Recommend appropriate hearing protection
- Audit this departmental program periodically
- Conduct audiograms, evaluate results, and notify the affected employee within 21 days of determination of an STS
- Retain audiograms and related medical records for at least seven (7) years beyond the employee's employment

D. Individual

- Attend training and receive audiometric testing
- Wear appropriate hearing protection when required and minimize noise exposure outside of work

APPENDIX A

LIST OF EMPLOYEES IN HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

**LARRY HANCOCK
RICK HANCOCK**

APPENDIX B

INVENTORY OF HIGH NOISE AREAS INVENTORY OF HIGH NOISE EQUIPMENT

APPENDIX C

TRAINING RECORDS

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