

Hearing Conservation Program

Introduction: Noise induced hearing loss in the workplace is a preventable occupational injury. For this reason, Dartmouth College requires and promotes the use of hearing protection whenever moderate to significant noise exposure may be present. Additionally, Dartmouth provides medical surveillance, training and information to its employees as required by 29 CFR 1910.95.

Purpose: To minimize the potential for occupational noise induced hearing loss.

Scope: This policy applies to all Dartmouth College employees. A copy of this policy must be readily available at all times.

Responsibilities:

Supervisors

- To identify tasks that may be at or near the 8-hour Time Weighted Average (TWA) of 85 decibels (DBA) as measured on the A scale.
- To ensure that College facilities where noise exposures may be at or near the TWA are posted with approved signs. (See Attachments 1&2)
- To require hearing protection for all tasks at or near the TWA and to encourage the use of hearing protection in all other noisy tasks.
- To request assistance in noise level determinations or in the selection of hearing personal protective equipment (PPE).

Employees

- To wear hearing protection whenever it is required and as needed for noisy tasks.
- To assist their supervisors and EHS in the identification of tasks that may warrant hearing protection.
- To be vigilant about using hearing protection when needed at home or during recreational activities.

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

- To conduct periodic hazard assessments to determine areas and tasks that pose potential noise hazards
- To help standardize the selection and use of hearing personal protective equipment.
- To provide information and training on hearing conservation.
- To oversee the medical surveillance component of this program.
- To audit this program and its participants on a periodic basis to assess compliance and ensure program viability.

Program Elements:

(1) Noise Exposure

Protection against the effects of occupational noise exposure must be provided when the sound levels exceed those shown in Table 1. Feasible engineering and/or administrative controls must be used to keep exposure below the allowable limit.

When engineering or administrative controls fail to reduce the noise level to within the levels of Table 1, personal protective equipment must be provided and used to reduce the noise to an acceptable level.

Where the sound levels equal or exceed an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels measured on the A scale, all elements of the Dartmouth hearing conservation program apply. Exposure to impulsive or impact noise should not exceed 140 decibels peak sound pressure level (Table 1).

Table 1

Noise Duration per day in hours	Sound Level in DBA (Slow Response)
8	90
6	92
4	95
3	97
2	100
1.5	102
1	105
0.5	110
0.25 or less	115

(2) Medical Surveillance

Dartmouth College makes arrangements for a professional audiometric testing service to provide annual hearing tests at no charge to its employees. Additional follow-up testing and special medical circumstances are provided for on a case-by-case basis through EHS.

(3) Training and Information

EHS provides training and information on hearing conservation on a periodic basis. Annually, the audiometric testing service provides a brief in-service on hearing protection as part of their annual program.

(4) Special Program Requirements

Radios, CD, Tape and other similar devices are not to be worn when operating equipment or while in posted areas. Such devices are not hearing protection and their use may exacerbate the potential for harm and pose other safety risks.

Radio style ear muffs must meet applicable ANSI standards and not exceed 82 dB. Dartmouth College will not provide radio style earmuffs unless in conjunction with radio communication system. Any use of such devices must be pre-approved by the employee's supervisor and EHS.

ANSI S12.6-1997 is the most recent ANSI standard for radio style ear muff hearing protection. ANSI S3. 19-1974 is the previous standard. Either designation will be acceptable.

Program Evaluation:

This program will be formally audited once every four years. On an on-going basis, EHS will provide periodic training and awareness information on the importance of hearing conservation.