

Hearing Conservation Program

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Grand Traverse County Hearing Conservation Program (HCP) is to protect County employees from the effects of occupational exposure to noise. The program provides guidelines to ensure the effective use of hearing protection as well as establishes procedures for an effective HCP.

Scope

This instruction applies to all Grand Traverse County employees that perform work with powered equipment including but not limited to lawn and maintenance equipment, saws, weed whackers, grass cutters, leaf blowers, all types of lawn mowers and other loud equipment.

Background

The County is responsible for ensuring that each employee has a safe and healthful place of employment that complies with all safety and health standards and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Act (MIOSHA). Various County departments are responsible for providing lawn care and maintenance in the Grand Traverse County region. Many of these environments have the potential to have high levels of noise. Therefore, the County has proactively established a HCP for all staff who conduct this type of work.

References

- Grand Traverse County Safety Policy.
- Occupational Health Standard Part 380, Rule R325.60107, Occupational Noise Exposure for General Industry.

Definitions

Action Level (AL) - An 8-hour, time-weighted average noise exposure of 85 decibels measured on the A-scale, slow response, or equivalently, a dose of 50%.

Audiogram - A chart, graph, or table resulting from an audiometric test showing an individual's hearing threshold levels as a function of frequency.

Baseline Audiogram - The audiogram against which future audiograms are compared.

Decibel (dB) - A unit of measurement of sound pressure level.

Health Care Provider - A physician who has been contracted by the County to perform baseline and annual audiograms.

Hertz (Hz) - A unit of measurement of frequency and is numerically equal to cycles per second.

Noise Dose - The ratio, expressed as a percentage, of the time integral, over a stated time or event, of the 0.6 power of the measured, slow, exponential time averaged, squared A-weighted sound

pressure and the product of the criterion duration (8 hours) and the 0.6 power of the squared sound pressure corresponding to the criterion sound level (90 dB).

Slow Response - A measurement time constant, or averaging time, of 1 second.

Sound Level - 10 times the common logarithm of the ratio of the square of the measured A-weighted sound pressure to the square of the standard reference pressure of 20 micropascals and is expressed in units of dBA.

Sound Level Meter - An instrument for the measurement of sound level.

Standard Threshold Shift (STS) - A change in the hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dB or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz in either ear.

Time-Weighted Average Sound Level - The sound level which, if constant over an 8-hour exposure, would result in the same noise dose as is measured.

TWA - Time-weighted average.

Responsibilities

A. Department Manager/Supervisor is responsible for:

1. Implementing the County's HCP as outlined.
2. Ensuring all staff that works with lawn and maintenance equipment are included in the HCP.
3. Ensuring that initial baseline and annual audiometric testing is scheduled and conducted.
4. Ensuring that reports of standard threshold shifts that meet the recording criteria are provided to Department Labor Economic Growth, Office of Human Resources (DLEG, OHR) for recording on the Injury/Illness Log.
5. Ensuring appropriate employee training on equipment and on the proper use and care of hearing protection devices.
6. Evaluating the HCP annually.

B. Grand Traverse County Human Resources Department is responsible for:

1. Ensuring that the contract is in place to provide annual audiometric testing to County staff impacted by this policy.
2. Serving as medical administrator for the County's HCP.
3. Receiving and maintaining records in a confidential manner.
4. If the comparison of the audiograms indicates that an employee has experienced a standard threshold shift in hearing, the health care provider will advise the medical administrator. The medical administrator will notify an employee of all of the following:
 - a) A standard threshold shift has occurred. The employee will be notified, in writing, within 21 days of its determination.
 - b) The need for further evaluation or retesting, the reason for the referral, the purpose and outcome, and whether or not the shift may be related to the use of hearing protectors.

C. Health Care Provider is responsible for:

1. Conducting a baseline audiogram for new County staff impacted by this policy.
2. Conducting audiograms on an annual basis for all County staff that work with powered lawn and maintenance equipment.
3. Providing a copy of audiogram to medical administrator.
 - a) Notifying the medical administrator of all County staff who experienced a standard threshold shift for logging and further follow-up as needed.

D. Employees that work with Lawn and Maintenance Equipment are responsible for:

1. Complying with requirements of the County's HCP. Failure to do so will result in discipline, up to and including termination.
2. Participating in training on the selection and appropriate use of hearing protection.
3. Wearing hearing protection when working in environments that may pose the potential for excessive noise exposure.

Medical Surveillance

As part of the medical surveillance program, all County staff who work with powered lawn and maintenance equipment will be provided:

- Baseline audiometric test.
- Annual audiometric test.
- Information on test results and follow-up as needed.
- Audiometric testing will be provided at no cost to the employee.
- Baseline audiograms will be conducted within six (6) months of hire.
- County staff that have a standard threshold shift shall be refitted and retrained, if necessary, in the proper use of hearing protection.
- County staff experiencing difficulty wearing hearing protection (i.e. irritation of the ear canals, pain) should immediately report this to their supervisor. Arrangements should be made, if necessary, to go to the health care provider for evaluation.

Recordkeeping

A. The Human Resources Department will maintain:

- Medical evaluation and audiometric tests.
- Training records.

B. Department Manager/Supervisor will maintain:

- Department evaluations of the HCP.

Audiometric tests and medical evaluations performed for hearing conservation purposes will be a permanent part of an employee's medical record, maintained in Human Resources. An employee's medical record will be made available to the individual upon request to Human Resources.

Training

All County staff who work with powered lawn and maintenance equipment will be provided information about the adverse effects of noise and how to prevent noise-induced hearing loss. At a minimum, training will cover the following topics:

1. Effects of noise on hearing.
2. Purpose of hearing protection; advantages and disadvantages, of various types of hearing protection.
3. Selection, fitting, use, and care of hearing protection.
4. Purpose of audiometric testing and an explanation of the testing procedures.
5. The need to wear hearing protection by recognizing environments with noise that may require hearing protection.

All County staff that work with powered lawn and maintenance equipment will be provided with a copy of this document.

Program Evaluation

- a) Every summer the Department Supervisor will conduct an annual evaluation of their departmental program, including wearer acceptance, appraisal of protection afforded, use of hearing protection, and training.
- b) The findings of the HCP evaluation will be documented, list plans to correct any deficiencies in the program, and set target dates for the implementation of the corrections.

Note: This policy may differ for those employees who are members of recognized unions, organizations, or associations. Any questions related to the content of this policy, or its interpretation, should be directed to Human Resources.

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