

PHYSICAL PLANT
OPERATING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PP/OP 02.15: Hearing Conservation Program

DATE: May 13, 2008

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Physical Plant Operating Policy/Procedure (PP/OP) is to establish a hearing conservation program in compliance with TTU OP 60.09 and provide monitoring and protection for personnel exposed to high-risk noise environments.

REVIEW

This PP/OP will be reviewed in May of every four years by the human resources manager for physical plant with recommendations forwarded to the managing director for physical plant.

POLICY/PROCEDURES

1. **General**

Physical Plant policy requires that employees working in a high-risk noise environment be monitored and protected against all exposure.

Each section director will:

- a. administer a continuous, effective monitoring program to ensure full protection of employee's hearing when exposure equals or exceeds 85 decibels.
- b. enforce compliance to this PP/OP.

2. **Monitoring**

- a. When information gathered from a preliminary noise survey indicates an employee's exposure equals or exceeds 85 decibels, that employee will be placed in a monitoring program. The sampling will be done to identify employees at high risk and help in the selection of proper hearing protection.
- b. Based on surveys completed by Environmental Health and Safety, noise levels have been found to meet and/or exceed 85 decibels in the following areas: Central Heating and Cooling Plant #1, Central Heating and Cooling Plant #2, International Textile Center, Cabinet Shop, Paint Shop paint booth, and Electric Shop generator maintenance.

- c. Monitoring will be repeated whenever a change in production processes, equipment, or controls increase noise exposures or by periodic survey by Environmental Health and Safety.

3. Identifying Excess Noise

- a. Supervisors will:
 - (1) identify suspected risk areas for monitoring,
 - (2) identify changes in the production process, equipment, system, or controls that increase noise exposure,
 - (3) advise the safety coordinator of identified areas that require monitoring.
- b. Employees will advise their supervisors of any situation they believe should be monitored for noise.
- c. Safety coordinator will:
 - (1) contact Environmental Health and Safety to schedule monitoring,
 - (2) provide affected areas with monitoring results.
- d. Employee Notification: Supervisors will notify each employee exposed at or above 85 decibels of the results of the monitoring.
- e. Affected employees or their representatives have the right to observe any noise measurement conducted.

4. Audiometric Testing

- a. The Physical Plant will establish and maintain an audiometric testing program by making annual audiometric testing mandatory to all employees whose exposure could equal or exceed 85 decibels.

- b. This testing program will also cover all new employees who meet the requirements of the General Policy. These employees will receive a baseline audiogram at the time that the Physical Plant hires them. Testing will be provided at no cost to the employee. No employee will be assigned to an area designated as noise hazardous areas without receiving a baseline audiogram.
- c. The employee's annual audiogram will be compared to the baseline audiogram administered at hiring to determine if the audiogram is valid and if a standard threshold shift has occurred.
- d. All employees in the hearing conservation program will receive an exit audiogram upon termination. The final audiogram will be compared to the baseline audiogram and any threshold shifts during employment will be noted.
- e. Testing will be done by qualified personnel. Evaluation of the audiograms will be done by a physician.
- f. Employees will be notified of scheduled testing and final results. (See Attachment A)
- g. Supervisors will:
 - (1) contact the safety office to schedule new employees for a baseline audiogram at the time of their employment physical at the Occ-Med Associates of Lubbock located at 56th and Avenue Q.
 - (2) contact the safety office to schedule annual audiograms for personnel identified in the General Policy of this Hearing Conservation Program.
 - (3) contact the safety office to schedule exit audiograms for personnel as needed.
 - (4) notify employees of the need to avoid high levels of noise exposure both at and away from the work place for at least fourteen hours prior to testing.
- h. Employees will avoid high levels of noise exposure both at and away from the workplace for at least fourteen hours prior to testing.

5. Standard Threshold Shifts

- a. A standard threshold shift in hearing is defined as a change in the hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 decibels or more at 2000, 3000, 4000 Hertz in either ear.
- b. If the annual audiogram or exit audiogram shows that an employee has suffered a standard threshold shift, the Physical Plant may obtain a retest within thirty (30) days and consider the results of the retest as the annual or exit audiogram. If the retest does show a standard threshold shift, the employee will be notified. The physician will review problem audiograms and determine whether there is a need for further evaluation.
- c. If it is determined that the standard threshold shift is not work related, the Physical Plant will ensure the following steps are taken when a standard threshold shift occurs:
 - (1) Employees not already using hearing protectors will be fitted, trained (in use and care), and required to use them;
 - (2) Employees already using hearing protectors will be refitted and retrained in their use and may be offered hearing protectors with a greater attenuation, if necessary;
 - (3) Employees will be referred for clinical evaluation as deemed necessary for additional testing at the employee's expense;
 - (4) The employee will be informed of the need for a medical examination if there is a medical condition of the ear that is unrelated to the use of hearing protectors.
- d. An annual audiogram may be substituted for the baseline audiogram if the audiologist evaluating the audiogram determines that:
 - (1) The standard threshold shift revealed by the audiogram is persistent; or
 - (2) The hearing threshold shown in the annual audiogram indicates significant improvement over the baseline audiogram.

(a) Supervisors will:

- [1] contact the safety office to reschedule employees within thirty (30) days for a retest if the annual audiogram reflects a standard threshold shift,
- [2] follow guidelines outlined above for non-work related standard threshold shifts.

6. Personal Protective Equipment

- a. The Physical Plant will make a choice of two hearing protectors (earplugs and/or earmuffs) available to all employees included in the hearing conservation program at no cost. Hearing protectors will be replaced as necessary.
- b. Department directors will ensure:
 - (1) that hearing protectors are worn;
 - (2) employees are trained in the use and care of all hearing protectors; and
 - (3) a proper initial fitting and supervise the correct use of all hearing protectors;

7. Training

- a. Each employee, upon assignment to an area with a high-risk noise environment, must be included in that department's hearing conservation program and receive training on the following:
 - (1) the effects of noise on hearing;
 - (2) the purpose of hearing protectors, the advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types and instructions on selection, fitting, use, and care;
 - (3) the purpose of audiometric testing and an explanation of the test procedures.
- b. The training program will be repeated annually for all employees included in the hearing conservation program. The Physical Plant Safety Coordinator will be responsible for initiating annual training. Training records will be maintained in the Safety Coordinator's permanent files.

Information provided in the training program will be updated to be consistent to changes in protective equipment and work processes.

- (1) Supervisors will:
 - (a) train new employees in the hearing conservation program as outlined above, and
 - (b) provide the Safety Coordinator with training documentation.
- (2) The Safety Coordinator will:
 - (a) initiate annual training and provide appropriate paperwork to supervisors for all personnel in the hearing conservation program, and
 - (b) maintain all training records on permanent file.

8. Access to Information and Training Materials

- a. The Physical Plant Safety Coordinator will:
 - (1) make available to affected employees or their representative copies of the Physical Plant Hearing Conservation Program Operating Policy/ Procedure, and
 - (2) provide, upon request, all materials related to the training and education of employees included under the Physical Plant Hearing Conversation Program.

9. Record Keeping

- a. All audiometric testing results will be filed in the Human Resources office for the duration of the affected employee's employment. The Physical Plant Safety Coordinator will be advised of personnel testing results.

Audiometric test records will include the following:

- (1) Name and job classification of the employee;

- (2) Date of the audiogram;
 - (3) The examiner's name; and
 - (4) Employee's most recent noise exposure assessment.
- b. Section directors will
- (1) retain records for all noise exposure measurements for a period of at least two years.
 - (2) advise the Physical Plant Safety Coordinator of all noise exposure measurements.
- c. The Physical Plant Safety Coordinator will provide all records required to be retained to employees, former employees, or their representatives.
- d. The Manager for Physical Plant Human Resources will maintain all audiometric testing results in the employee's health and safety file for the duration of the affected employee's employment plus ten years.

RESPONSIBILITIES

POSITION	SECTION	MONTH	DAY
Manager for Physical Plant Human Resources	Review	May (Every 4 Years)	1

APPROVED: _____
Reviewer

APPROVED: _____
Managing Director for Physical Plant