**Using this Template**

The following template can be used to help your organization develop a written Hearing Conservation Program. This template cannot be used as is – you must customize the template to meet the needs of your organization. We have made this template easier for you to customize by adding visual prompts that identify some areas where your input is needed. These are identified by yellow highlighted, red text in the template. You may also change any of the text in the template to meet your organization’s needs – for example, department names, job titles, listed responsibilities and audiologist. Your employee noise exposures and supplied hearing protection will need to be added to the appendices where appropriate.

*Example:*

<Company Name>

Hearing Conservation Program

becomes

XYZ Company

Hearing Conservation Program

To remove the colored highlighting from your text, left click and drag your mouse over the yellow text and click on the highlighter button from the font menu. To change the font color to black, select the text and click on the font color button.



To aid you in understanding the need to customize your program, several “Check Your Understanding” text boxes are also included throughout the template. After reading the information in the text box and adding the required information into the template, you may simply right click on the cross arrow box and select “cut.”

***Disclaimer.*** *This sample safety program template cannot be used as is. You must customize the template to meet the needs of your organization. EMC does not guarantee that this template is or can be relied on for compliance with any law or regulation, assurance against preventable losses, or freedom from legal liability. We make no representations or warranties of any kind whatsoever, either express or implied, in connection with the use of this template. EMC will not be liable for your use of the template as customized by you. All safety programs and policies, including this template and the information you supply to complete it, should be reviewed by your legal counsel and/or risk management staff.*

**<Company Name>**

**Hearing Conservation Program**

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| ***Check Your Understanding.*** Do you need a hearing conservation program? Do you have to raise your voice to make yourself heard while at a conversational distance (2-3 feet)? If so, then the answer is probably “yes.” If your employees are exposed to 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) noise levels of 85 dBA or more, OSHA requires that you have a hearing conservation program. If your employees work more than 8 hours per day, OSHA lowers the action level using a formula. * For 9 -hour days the action level is 84 dBA
* For 10-hour days the action level is 83 dBA
* For 12-hour days the action level is 82 dBA

Most damage done to the ear is permanent and will not be repaired by the body. For more hearing conservation information, visit OSHA’s occupational noise exposure standard [1910.95](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjerry-l%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CTemp%5C%3A%20https%3A%5Cwww.osha.gov%5Cpls%5Coshaweb%5Cowadisp.show_document%3Fp_table%3DSTANDARDS%26p_id%3D9735). |

**Revision History**

<Revision XX – April XX, 20XX>

**Purpose and Scope**

<Company Name’s> Hearing Conservation Program is designed to protect employees from hearing loss caused by uncontrolled exposure to hazardous noise by reducing employee noise exposures and providing appropriate hearing protection where this noise cannot be controlled.

The program includes the identification and control of hazardous noise within <Company Name>’s work areas through the use of engineering and administrative controls combined with the selection and use of hearing protection. It also details the areas of responsibility for managers/department heads, supervisors and employees within the company. Additionally, the program includes requirements for noise exposure surveys, audiometric testing, training in the selection and use of hearing protection, recordkeeping and program evaluation.

This program applies to all employees whose noise exposure levels equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) noise level of 85 dBA. All employees are required to follow the minimum procedures outlined in this program. Any deviations from this program must be immediately brought to the attention of the Program Administrator.

**Program Responsibilities**

**Management.** The management of <Company Name> is committed to the safety and health of its workers. Management supports the efforts of the Program Administrator by pledging financial and leadership support for the identification and mitigation of noise hazards. Management will regularly communicate with employees about this program.

**Program Administrator.** The Program Administratorreports directly to upper management and is responsible for conducting the hazard assessments, and the implementation, training and administration of the program. The Program Administrator will monitor the results of the program to determine needed focus areas. The Program Administrator will also:

* Coordinate and supervise any noise exposure monitoring
* Identify employees to be included in the program
* Designate areas where hearing protection must be worn
* Coordinate and supervise audiometric testing
* Develop hearing protection policies
* Supervise hearing protection selection
* Supervise employee training
* Coordinate and supervise recordkeeping
* Evaluate the program annually
* Update the program whenever new equipment is introduced

**Supervisors.** Supervisor’s responsibilities include:

* Notifying the Program Administrator if a change in the workplace results in higher noise exposure levels
* Ensuring that employees properly use and maintain their hearing protection
* Ensuring employees comply with the requirements of this program

**Employees.** All employees working in designated noise areas with noise exposures equal or exceeding the action level (85 dBA for an 8-hour shift, 84 for 9-hour, 83 for 10-hour and 82 for 12-hour) will be included in the program. A list of identified areas and employees can be found in **Appendix A**. Employee responsibilities include:

* Notifying their supervisor if a change in the workplace results in exposure to higher noise levels
* Using noise control measures as required
* Using hearing protection as required
* Attending all training and audiometric testing
* Notifying their supervisor of any complicating medical problems as soon as possible

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| ***Check Your Understanding.*** The section below provides the steps to monitor an area or employee to determine whether their noise exposure is above the action level. Noise monitoring can be done by using a sound level meter which determines the noise levels in the employees hearing zone (near the ear). Using a meter works well when noise is steady or constant, but is difficult to estimate when noise is variable, such as periodic grinding, pounding or sawing. When noise is not constant, the best method is for the employees to wear a noise dosimeter, which has a microphone that is usually attached near the collar, and records noise levels for the entire shift. The dosimeter will then provide a daily time weighted average noise exposure. When daily tasks vary, it is ideal to use a dosimeter for multiple days or on multiple employees.  |

**Noise Monitoring**

Noise exposure monitoring will be conducted to:

* Determine whether hearing hazards exist
* Determine whether noise presents a safety hazard by interfering with speech communication or recognition of audible warning signals
* Identify employees for noise control efforts and establish hearing protection practices
* Identify specific noise sources that require engineering and administrative controls
* Evaluate the success of noise control efforts

The Program Administrator will determine, with the assistance of area supervisors, which areas need monitoring. Monitoring will be performed using personal dosimeters. All monitoring for noise exposure levels will be conducted by <designated person/company> an outside consulting firm. Employees will be allowed to observe or have a representative observe noise monitoring.

Monitoring will be conducted whenever there is a change in equipment, process or controls that may affect the noise levels. This includes the addition, removal or replacement of machinery, or change to the building structure. Supervisors are responsible for informing the Program Administrator when these types of changes are implemented.

The result of the noise exposure monitoring will be recorded on the form in **Appendix B**. All areas requiring hearing protection will be designated on the map included in **Appendix C.**

If the results of any monitoring equals or exceeds the action level (85 dBA TWA₈)The Program Administrator will:

* Notify in writing all employees working in areas at or above the action level
* Provide appropriate hearing protection for exposed employees
* Work with supervisors to ensure hearing protection is worn by employees at all times while in the noise area
* Investigate and implement feasible engineering and administrative controls to reduce the noise levels

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| ***Check Your Understanding.*** There are three methods for controlling employee exposure to noise; engineering controls, administrative controls and hearing protection. Examples of engineering controls include purchasing replacement equipment that produces less noise, redesigning existing machinery to produce less noise or building enclosures to lessen the noise exposure. Examples of administrative controls include reducing exposure through job rotation or extended breaks. Engineering controls should always be considered first. If these controls are not feasible then consider administrative controls. If neither engineering controls nor administrative controls are feasible, hearing protection must be worn that reduces the employee’s exposure to below the action level.  |

**Noise Control**

**Engineering and Administrative Controls.**

<Company Name> will first attempt to control existing noise hazards by implementing as many engineering controls as possible. If engineering controls are not feasible, then administrative controls will be examined.

**Hearing Protection.**

When engineering and administrative controls are not feasible or do not eliminate the hazardous noise, hearing protection will be required. Additionally, management, supervisors and employees shall properly wear the prescribed hearing protection while working or traveling through any area that is designated as a high noise area in **Appendix C**.

Employees will be provided with an appropriate selection of hearing protection free of charge. The selection will include <three> distinct types; molded earplugs, foam earplugs and earmuffs. The hearing protection selection must:

* Reduce all employee exposures to a level below 85 dBA TWA₈
* Include various sizes and shapes to fit ear canals
* Be appropriate for different working conditions which make hearing protection difficult to wear

The hearing protection selected and issued to all affected employees can be found in **Appendix D**.

To determine the hearing protection’s effective protection level the following formulas will be used.

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| **Type of Hearing Protection** | **Effective Protection** |
| Single hearing protection  | Estimated Exposure (dBA) = TWA (dBA) – [(NRR – 7) x 50%] |
| Dual hearing protection  | Estimated Exposure (dBA) = TWA (dBA) – {[(NRR – 7) x 50%]+5} |

**Non-Required Hearing Protection.**

Employees who work in areas or at tasks that produce noise levels below the action level will be allowed to wear hearing protection for comfort reasons as long as it does not impact work communication or emergency announcements. The employee’s supervisor will determine whether an employee can wear his/her personal hearing protection and will inspect the hearing protection prior to use. These devices will be supplied by the employee and all use and care will be the responsibility of the employee. If employee chooses to wear personal hearing protection for noise below the action level he/she is required to attend the Hearing Conservation Program training.

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| ***Check Your Understanding.*****What is an audiogram?**An audiogram is a hearing test that measures the quietest sounds a person can hear at different frequencies. An audiogram is provided to employees before they are first exposed to excessive noise to establish a baseline. Subsequent annual hearing tests are compared to the original baseline audiogram. The healthcare professional performing the test with look at the results for the 2000, 3000 and 4000 Hz frequencies. A change in these three frequencies that averages 10 db or more, in either ear, is called a standard threshold shift. **What is a standard threshold shift?**A standard threshold shift is a significant change in hearing ability or a hearing loss. Over time, with enough threshold shift, a person will have a great deal of trouble understanding speech. A loss of hearing may or may not be an OSHA 300 log recordable injury. Refer to [1904.10](https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9641) for additional information on how to evaluate whether a hearing loss should be recorded in the OSHA 300 log. |

**Audiometric Testing Program**

Employees in the Hearing Conservation Program will be provided baseline and annual audiometric testing at no cost to determine if a standard threshold shift has occurred. The test will take place within 6 months of an employee’s first exposure at or above the action level and will be conducted by <Audiometric Contractor>.

Annual audiograms will be conducted within one year of the baseline and every year thereafter if an employee continues to be exposed to noise levels at or above the action level. The baseline and annual audiograms will be evaluated to establish a hearing threshold and annual retests will be compared to the baseline to determine if a standard threshold shift has occurred.

Before an audiometric test can be administered, the employee must have at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise (such as over a weekend) or worn hearing protection for this period. Employees will have access to their monitoring and audiometric testing records.

Employees who have experienced a standard threshold shift will be referred to a clinical audiologist or otologist for further examination. Such referrals may also be made if the audiological contractor suspects that medical problems of the ear have been caused or aggravated by hearing protection.

<Audiometric Contractor> will comply with all requirements of the OSHA standard on hearing conservation including test location, equipment calibration and recordkeeping requirements.

**Standard Threshold Shift (STS).**

Any standard threshold shift will be evaluated by <Company Name>’s designated physician to determine if it is work-related. This evaluation will be done at no cost to the employee. If the annual audiogram shows that an employee experienced a standard threshold shift, a retest may be conducted within 30 days and the results of the retest will be used as the annual audiogram.

If a standard threshold shift has occurred:

* The employee’s hearing protection will be refitted
* The employee will be retrained in the use of hearing protection and provided with hearing protection offering greater attenuation if necessary.
* The Program Administrator will determine whether the hearing loss should be recorded in the OSHA 300 form.
* The employee will be notified in writing by <position/person designated> within 21 days (See **Appendix E**).

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| ***Check Your Understanding.*** Employee training is a critical component of a hearing conservation program. Remember to document all training and retraining courses with at least the following information: employee name, trainer name, content of training and date of training.  |

**Employee Training**

Employees included in the program will be required to attend initial and annual training on noise exposure and the Hearing Conservation Program. Topics will include:

* Effects of hazardous noise on hearing
* Purpose of hearing protection
* Advantages, disadvantages and attenuation of various types of hearing protection
* Instructions on selection, fitting, use and care of hearing protection
* The locations within the company where hearing protection is required
* Explanation of audiometric testing
* Review of the OSHA hearing protection standard
* Company rules and procedures concerning hearing protection and requirements for hazardous noise areas

Training of each employee will be documented using the Employee Training Record (**Appendix F**) and kept on file.

**Periodic Program Review**

At least annually, the Program Administrator will conduct a program review to assess the progress and success of the program. Annual reviews will be documented with the form shown in **Appendix G**.

**Outside Contractors**

Whenever outside personnel are contracted to work in areas where hearing protection is required, they will be informed of the hearing protection requirements by the Program Administrator or area supervisor. The noise exposure map will be shared with the contractor before any work commences.

**Recordkeeping**

The following records for the Hearing Conservation Program will be maintained by the Program Administrator:

* Noise exposure monitoring – retained for <two> years
* Audiometric evaluation - retained for 30 years after employment termination

 The record should include:

* Name and job classification of employee
* Date of the audiogram
* Examiner’s name
* Date of last acoustic or exhaustive calibration of audiometer
* Employee’s most recent noise exposure assessment
* Training documentation – retained for <seven> years
* Implemented controls – retained for <two> years
* Selected hearing protection – retained for <two> years

**Appendix A – Included Employees**

These employees are included in the Hearing Conservation Program:

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| **Employee Name**  | **Job Title** | **Inclusion Date** |
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**Appendix B – Noise Exposure Measurement**

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| **Location** | **Operation** | **Date** | **Exposure Level (dBA)** |
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**Appendix C – Noise Exposure Map**

<Paste your own maps here>

**Appendix D – Hearing Protection Selection**

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| **Hearing Protection Equipment Summary** |
| **Type (ear muff, ear plug)** | **Name (brand and model)** | **Noise Reduction Rating (NRR)** |
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| **Record of Hearing Protection Needs** |
| **Employee Name** | **Department** | **Job Description/ Equipment Being Used** | **Type of Hearing Protection Issued** | **Date Issued** |
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**Appendix E – Standard Threshold Shift Letter**

<Date>

Dear <Employee Name>,

Your most recent audiometric test result was compared to your baseline audiogram. This comparison indicates that you have experienced a significant change in your hearing ability or hearing loss. An audiogram cannot define why you have a hearing loss, but there are many possible reasons such as infection, wax buildup in your ear and/or noise. By taking the necessary action now, we can try to stop your hearing loss from getting worse.

Please call <designated physician office and phone #> to arrange an appointment with <designated physician> for a medical evaluation to help determine the cause. Remember whenever you are in an identified noise work area, hearing protection **must** be used.

Please contact the Hearing Conservation Program Administrator <name, phone #, email address> if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

<Name>

<Signature>

**Appendix F – Hearing Conservation Program Training Log**

The following individuals received training on the Hearing Conservation Program.

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| **Print Name** | **Sign Name** |
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| Print Instructor’s Name |  |
| Instructor’s Signature |  |
| Instructor’s Title |  |
| Date of Training |  |

**Appendix G – Program Evaluation Checklist**

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| --- | --- |
| Date of Evaluation: | Evaluated by (list all present): |
| Written Program Reviewed: Yes No |
| Do injury records or audiometric testing indicate a need for additional employee training on the Hearing Conservation Program? Yes No |
| Do any NEW jobs, processes or areas produce a high noise levels? Yes NoIf yes, list: |
| Is there any record of failure to correct reported hearing or noise problems in a timely manner?If yes, what corrective action is needed? |
| The following content was added/modified/removed from the written program: |
| Comments: |

**Questions to ask during the program evaluation:**

|  | **Yes** | **No** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Training and Education** |  |  |
| Has training been conducted at least once a year? |  |  |
| Was the training provided by a qualified instructor? |  |  |
| Was the success of each training program evaluated? |  |  |
| Is the content revised periodically? |  |  |
| Are managers and supervisors directly involved? |  |  |
| Are posters, regulations, handouts and employee newsletters used as supplements? |  |  |
| Are counseling sessions conducted for employees having problems with hearing protection devices or showing hearing threshold shifts? |  |  |
| **Supervisor Involvement** |  |  |
| Have supervisors been provided with the knowledge required to supervise the use and care of hearing protection? |  |  |
| Do supervisors wear hearing protection in appropriate areas? |  |  |
| Are disciplinary actions enforced when employees repeatedly refuse to wear hearing protection? |  |  |
| **Noise Measurements** |  |  |
| Were the essential noise studies performed? |  |  |
| Are the results routinely sent to supervisors and other key individuals? |  |  |
| Are results included in health/medical records of noise exposed employees? |  |  |
| Are results maintained appropriately? |  |  |
| Are noise measurement results considered when purchasing new equipment? Modifying the facility? Relocating employees? |  |  |
| Have there been changes in areas, equipment or processes that have altered noise exposure? Have follow-up noise measurements been conducted? |  |  |
| Are appropriate steps taken to include (or exclude) employees in the hearing loss prevention programs whose exposures have changed? |  |  |
| **Engineering and Administrative Controls** |  |  |
| Have noise control needs been prioritized? |  |  |
| Has the cost-effectiveness of various options been addressed? |  |  |
| Have employees and supervisors been counseled on the operation and maintenance of noise control devices? |  |  |
| Are noise control projects monitored to ensure timely completion? |  |  |
| Are noisy processes conducted during shifts with fewer employees? |  |  |
| Do employees have sound-treated lunch or break areas? |  |  |
| **Audiometry and Recordkeeping** |  |  |
| Has the audiometric technician been adequately trained, certified and recertified as necessary? |  |  |
| Do on-the-job observations of the technicians indicate that they perform a thorough and valid audiometric test, instruct and consult the employee effectively, and keep appropriate records? |  |  |
| Are hearing threshold levels reasonably consistent from test to test? If not, are the reasons for inconsistencies investigated promptly? |  |  |
| Are the annual test results compared to the baseline test? |  |  |
| Is the annual incidence of standard threshold shift greater than a few percent? If so, are problem areas addressed?  |  |  |
| Are audiometric trends identified, both in individuals and in groups of employees?  |  |  |
| Do records show that appropriate audiometer calibration procedures have been followed? |  |  |
| Are the results of audiometric tests being communicated to supervisors and managers as well as to employees? |  |  |
| Are employees with a standard threshold shift notified in writing within at least 21 days?  |  |  |
| **Referrals** |  |  |
| Are referral procedures clearly specified? |  |  |
| Are there letters of agreement between the company and consulting physicians or audiologists? |  |  |
| Do you ensure that employees needing evaluation or treatment actually receive the service? |  |  |
| Are records properly sent to the physician or audiologist, and back to the company? |  |  |
| **Hearing Protection Devices** |  |  |
| Has hearing protection been made available to all employees whose daily average noise exposures are 85 dBA or above?  |  |  |
| Are employees given the opportunity to select from a variety of appropriate protection? |  |  |
| Are employees fitted carefully with attention to comfort? |  |  |
| Is hearing protection inspected regularly for wear or defects, and replaced immediately if necessary? |  |  |
| If employees use disposable hearing protection, are replacements readily available? |  |  |
| Do employees understand how to keep hearing protection clean? |  |  |
| Have any employees developed ear infections or irritations associated with the use of hearing protection? |  |  |
| Have alternative types of hearing protection been considered when problems with current devices are experienced? |  |  |
| Do workers complain that hearing protection interferes with their ability to do their jobs? |  |  |
| Do they interfere with spoken instructions or warning signals? |  |  |
| Are these complaints addressed? |  |  |
| Are employees encouraged to take their hearing protection home if they engage in noisy non-occupational activities? |  |  |
| Have at-the-ear protection levels been evaluated to ensure that employees aren’t over or under protected? |  |  |
| Is each hearing protection user required to demonstrate that he or she understands how to use and care for the hearing protection? |  |  |
| **Administration** |  |  |
| Have there been any changes in federal or state regulations? |  |  |
| Have hearing loss prevention program’s policies been modified to reflect these changes? |  |  |
| Are copies of company policies and guidelines regarding the hearing loss prevention program available in the offices that support the various program elements? |  |  |
| Are those who implement the program elements aware of these policies? |  |  |
| Are necessary materials and supplies being ordered with a minimum delay? |  |  |
| Is the performance of key personnel evaluated periodically? |  |  |
| If such performance is found to be less than acceptable, are steps taken to correct the situation? |  |  |
| Has the failure to hear warning shouts or alarms been tied to any accidents or injuries? |  |  |
| If so, have remedial steps been taken? |  |  |