

**HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM AND NOISE CONTROL
DOCUMENT NUMBER: 2002**

**COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE
STANDARD SAFETY OPERATIONS MANUAL**

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PURPOSE: California Code of Regulations, Title 8, General Industry Safety Orders, Sections 5096, 5097, 5098, 5099, and 5100 set forth the guidelines for employers in complying with the Hearing Conservation Program. This procedure establishes the Riverside County Hearing Conservation Program in compliance with California statutes.

POLICY: All County Organizations will develop and implement a written Hearing Conservation Program (HCP) as needed, specific to their organizations and facilities, to assure noise-induced hearing loss as a result of occupational noise exposure is prevented or minimized.

OBJECTIVE: Maintain employee safety and health, define the guidelines for the hearing conservation program for all organizations, and assure compliance with regulatory requirements.

SCOPE: This procedure applies to all County of Riverside Organizations, and outlines the responsibilities and actions needed for the prevention of occupationally-induced hearing loss in County employees.

REFERENCE: CCR Title 8, GISO Sections 5096, 5097, 5098, 5099, and 5100.

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I. OVERVIEW

The County of Riverside Hearing Conservation Program provides information and guidance on identifying noise hazards, and includes guidelines to be used by County organizations in preparing individualized programs. It also provides procedures for appropriate medical monitoring of employees exposed to excess noise. The program identifies documentation, communication, and training necessary to ensure the health and safety of County employees.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT

Organization management and supervisors have the following responsibilities with regard to Noise Control and Hearing Conservation:

- A. Ensure the implementation of the Noise Control and Hearing Conservation Program for all County organizations that have any employees exposed to noise as determined by Section IV of this document.
- B. Authorize budgeting and expenditure of necessary resources to implement the program.
- C. Provide corrective action as may be deemed necessary or practical to modify or replace equipment, machinery, facilities, and tools which are found to create noise levels above exposure limits if technologically feasible.
- D. Request the name of a contractor approved by the County Safety Division and C.H.A. Industrial Hygiene to study specific operations, facilities, and equipment to determine employee noise level exposure.
- E. Utilize County Safety Division approved contractors to make sound level studies and surveys of specific equipment areas, facilities, work locations, and operations to determine the degree of employee noise level exposure.

Supervisors of employees in areas or operations which have been determined to have noise levels above acceptable or controllable levels shall:

- A. Authorize and arrange to have exposed employees equipped with approved hearing protection devices with a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) or as determined by NIOSH methods 1, 2 or 3, per Appendix E, CCR Title 8, GISO Section 5100.9990E. (NRR ratings must be printed on the outside of the package of the hearing protection per EPA regulation).
- B. Make frequent checks to ensure employees are properly using hearing protection devices. Strictly enforce the use of hearing protection devices where determined necessary.
- C. Ensure employees who are covered by the Hearing Conservation Program cooperate with the Occupational Health Services Medical Facility, or other authorized contract facility, in completing required periodic audiometric examinations.
- D. Ensure employees comply with requirements specified in Title 8, California Code of Regulations, General Industry Safety Orders, and the policies or procedures specified herein.

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II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT - continued

- E. Utilize County Safety Division approved contractors to reevaluate work areas and locations where employees are known to be, or suspected of being, exposed to noise levels at or above an 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) of 85 dBA.
- F. Specify those areas, equipment, operations and employees having a noise exposure equal to or greater than 85 dBA, 8-hour time weighted average (TWA). Document those areas and send a copy to the County Safety Division.
- G. Identify those areas and jobs where hearing protection is required. Document those areas and jobs and send a copy to the County Safety Division.
- H. Prepare and conduct annual education program on hearing conservation for employees. See Section VI, of this document. The training program shall be updated consistent with changes in protective equipment and work processes.
- I. Upon completion of employee training, have employee complete SOP Form 2002-1, obtain appropriate signatures, and distribute accordingly.

III. NOISE LEVEL EXPOSURE LIMITS

The following exposure limits are established to protect employees from harmful effects of noise in the workplace.

- A. Continuous Noise: Protection against the effects of noise exposure shall be provided when sound levels exceed those shown below when measured on the A-scale of a standard sound level meter at slow response:

Permissible Noise Exposure Limits

Duration per day/hours	Sound level, 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

- B. Impulsive or Impact Noise: Exposure to impulsive or impact noise shall not exceed 140 dB peak sound pressure level.
- C. When the daily noise exposure is composed of two or more periods of noise exposure of different levels, their combined effect should be considered, rather than the individual effect of each.

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III. NOISE LEVEL EXPOSURE LIMITS - continued

- D. Measurement of Noise Levels: Noise and levels of exposure shall be measured by qualified contractors, approved by the County Safety Division, using calibrated sound level meters meeting current ANSI S1.4 "Specification for Sound Level Meters", or dosimeters meeting current ANSI S1.25, "Specification for Personal Noise Dosimeters".
- E. Periodic Monitoring of Noise Levels: Noise monitoring or measuring shall be conducted by County Safety Division approved contractors when information indicates that any employee's noise exposure may equal or exceed the "Action level"; whenever a change in production, process, equipment or controls increases noise exposure to the extent that:
 - 1. Additional employees may be exposed at, or above the Action level.
 - 2. The hearing protectors in use may be inadequate to accommodate the noise change.

Additionally:

- 1. The monitoring may be observed by the affected employees or their representatives, if desired.
 - 2. The employer shall notify each employee exposed at or above the Action level of the results of the monitoring.
- F. Employee Exposure to Noise Levels: Exposure to excessive noise shall be eliminated by engineering and/or administrative controls when feasible, otherwise personal protective equipment shall be provided and used to reduce sound levels within the levels of the above table.

IV. HEARING CONSERVATION

If an employee's exposure to noise equals or exceeds an 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) sound level of 85 dBA, an effective Hearing Conservation Program shall be initiated. An exposure level of 85 dBA or greater will trigger the Hearing Conservation Program.

The Hearing Conservation Program shall contain three basic parts:

- A. Assessment of Employee's Noise Exposure.

Noise Monitoring: When information indicates that any employee's exposure may equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels, the Supervisor shall ensure that a County Safety Division Contractor obtain measurements for employees who may be exposed at or above the "Action Level".

- 1. All continuous, intermittent and impulsive sound levels from 80 dB to 130 dB shall be integrated into the computation.

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IV. HEARING CONSERVATION – continued

2. Monitoring shall be repeated whenever a change in production, process, equipment or controls increases noise exposure to the extent that:
 - a. Additional employees may be exposed at or above the action level, or
 - b. The attenuation provided by hearing protectors being used by employees may be rendered inadequate to meet the requirements of Section 5098.
 3. Managers and Supervisors shall determine if an employee is exposed to a daily dose greater than the permitted exposure level, utilizing County Safety Division approved contractors.
 4. If routine/periodic survey monitoring identifies an employee for inclusion in a Hearing Conservation Program, additional monitoring shall be conducted to obtain measurements of other employees who may be similarly exposed.
- B. Control of Noise Exposure:
1. Engineering and/or administrative controls;
 2. Hearing Protection Devices (to be used only after abatement of noise has been documented as engineering and/or economically infeasible).
 - a. Hearing protectors issued to employees shall provide a degree of protection to reduce noise exposure below limits prescribed.
 - b. Evaluation of hearing protection devices for specific noise environments shall be performed using one of the methods prescribed in the Cal/OSHA Hearing Conservation Regulation, utilizing either a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) or NIOSH method 1, 2 or 3, per Appendix E, CCR Title 8, GISO Section 5100.9990E. (NRR ratings must be printed on the outside of the package of the hearing protection per EPA regulation).
 - c. Those employees required to wear hearing protectors shall be given an opportunity to select hearing protectors from a variety (at least two) of suitable types (i.e., earplugs or earmuffs).
 - d. Hearing protectors will be provided and replaced as necessary, at no cost to the employee.
 - e. Procedures shall be established and implemented to ensure proper issuance, cleaning, maintenance and training in the use of hearing protectors.
 - f. Each employee receiving a pair of earplugs for reduction of exposure shall be fitted by an individual qualified and/or trained in the proper selection and fitting of ear plugs.
 - g. A variety of suitable hearing protectors (ear plugs and earmuffs) shall be made available to all identified employees. To ensure the required level of protection is achieved with ear plug-type protectors, a proper medical fit will be conducted.

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IV. HEARING CONSERVATION – continued

- c. An audiologist, otolaryngologist or physician, authorized by the County Safety Division, will determine whether there is a need for further evaluation.
- d. If a comparison of the annual audiogram to the baseline audiogram indicates a standard threshold shift, the employee must be informed of this fact, in writing, within 21 days of the determination.
- e. Unless a County Safety Division approved physician determines that the standard threshold shift is not work related or aggravated by occupational noise exposure, the Organization will ensure that the following steps are taken when a standard threshold shift occurs:
 - i. An employee not using hearing protectors must be fitted with hearing protectors, trained in their use and care, and required to use them; and;
 - ii. An employee already using hearing protectors will be refitted and retrained in the use of hearing protectors and provided with hearing protectors offering greater protection if necessary.
 - iii. Refer the employee for an audiological or otological examination, if additional testing is necessary, or if the Organization suspects that a medical condition of the ear is caused or aggravated by the wearing of hearing protectors.
 - iv. Inform the employee of the need for an otological evaluation if a medical condition of the ear which is unrelated to the use of hearing protectors is suspected.
- f. If audiometric testing of an employee whose exposure to noise is less than an 8-hour time weight average of 90 dBA indicates that a standard threshold shift is not persistent, the Organization:
 - i. Will inform the employee of the new audiometric interpretation; and
 - ii. May discontinue the required use of hearing protectors for that employee.
- g. The annual audiogram may be substituted for the baseline audiogram when, in the judgment of the County Safety Division authorized Specialist evaluating the audiogram:
 - i. The Standard threshold shift revealed by the audiogram is persistent; or,
 - ii. The hearing threshold demonstrated in the annual audiogram indicates significant improvement over the baseline audiogram.
- h. Audiometric tests must be performed on equipment as specified in GISO 5097. Equipment must be maintained and operated by qualified individuals, outlined in GISO 5097.

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V. RECORDKEEPING

- A. With the assistance of the Human Resources - Safety Division, each organization shall establish a recordkeeping system, which meets the requirements of California Code of Regulations, Title 8, General Industry Safety Orders, Sections 5097, 5098, 5099, and 5100. The following data shall be maintained:
1. Noise exposure measurements. The Organization shall maintain an accurate record of all employee exposure measurements required by Section 5097(b).
 2. Audiometric test results including audiograms, name and classification of employee, date of audiogram, the name of the examiner, date of audiometer calibration and employee's most recent noise exposure assessment.
 3. Background noise levels in audiometric test rooms.
 4. Training records.
- B. Record retention. The organization shall retain records required, listed under Section A above, for at least the following periods:
1. Noise exposure measurement records shall be retained for two (2) years.
 2. Audiometric test records shall be retained for the duration of the affected employee's employment plus 30 years.
 3. Background noise levels in audiometric testing rooms shall be retained for the duration of the affected employee's employment plus 30 years.
 4. Training records shall be retained for three (3) years.
- C. Access to Records: All records required shall be provided upon written request to affected employees, former employees, representatives designated by the individual employee or a designated representative of Cal/OSHA.

Managers and Supervisors shall follow the County of Riverside guidelines to comply with requests for employee exposure and medical records.

VI. TRAINING

- A. The Organization will institute a training program for all employees who are exposed to noise at or above an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dBA, and shall ensure employee participation in such program.
- B. The Organization will insure that training is repeated annually for each employee included in the hearing conservation program.

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VI. TRAINING - continued

- C. The Organization will ensure that each employee is given information annually 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; and
 - 3. The purpose of audiometric testing, and an explanation of the test procedures.
- D. The Organization will make available to all affected employees or their representatives, copies of Article 105 and will post a copy in the workplace.
- E. Employees will be informed of hazardous areas through appropriate signs and instructions.
- F. Hearing protectors will not be issued to an employee until proper use and maintenance procedures have been demonstrated by the Supervisor.
- G. All employee training shall be documented on the County of Riverside Individual Employee Training Document, SOP Form 2002-1 (sample form included).

VII. TECHNICAL EVALUATION

It is the policy of the County of Riverside to implement the practices outlined in the Appendices of Article 105, Control of Noise Exposures, Title 8, California Code of Regulations, General Industry Safety Orders, which deal with the technical aspects of noise control. These appendices are listed below:

- A. Appendix A, Noise Exposure Computation.
- B. Appendix B, Audiometric Measuring Instruments.
- C. Appendix C, Audiometric Test Rooms.
- D. Appendix D, Acoustic Calibration of Audiometers.
- E. Appendix E, Methods of Estimating the Adequacy of Hearing Protection Attenuation.

It is the responsibility of organizational management to either provide or arrange for consultation to ensure that the practices outlined in all Appendices to Article 105 are implemented throughout all County Organizations and by contractors performing services for the County of Riverside.

VIII. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Employees who violate the provisions of the Hearing Conservation Program are subject to disciplinary procedures provided for in County Ordinance Number 440 and various Memoranda of Understanding governing the relations between the County and its employees, **employees who fail to conform to established safety policies, rules and standards should be disciplined.** (See Standard Safety Operations Manual, Document 300).

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IX. GLOSSARY

Action level - An 8-hour time weighted average of 85 decibels measured on the A-scale, slow response, or equivalently, a dose of fifty percent.

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

Audiologist - A professional, specializing in the study and rehabilitation of hearing, which is certified by the American Speech, Hearing & Language Association or licensed by a state board of examiners.

A Weighted Sound Level (dBA) - The ear does not respond equally to all frequencies. Therefore, to obtain a single number representing the sound level of a noise containing a wide range of frequencies in a manner representative of the ear's response, it is necessary to reduce, or weight, the effects of the low and high frequencies with respect to the middle frequencies. The result and sound level is said to be A-weighted.

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

Criterion Sound Level - A sound level of 90 decibels.

Daily Noise Dose - The cumulative noise exposure of an employee during a working day.

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

Decibel (dB) - A non-dimensional unit used to express levels. It is a logarithmic expression of the ratio of a measured quantity to reference quantity.

Dose - A single index number as defined by Cal/OSHA.

dBA - (Decibels-A-Weighted) - A unit of measurement of sound level corrected to the A-weighted scale, as defined in ANSI S1.4-1971 (R1976), using a reference level of 20 micropascals (0.00002 Newton per square meter).

Dosimeter - An instrument which registers the occurrence and accumulative duration of noise exceeding a predetermined level at a chosen point in the environment. As a calculation, it is based on the dose (Noise Exposure Index) concept and measured as a percentage of the allowable limit.

Frequency - The time rate of repetition of a periodic phenomenon. It is expressed in Hertz (H²), formerly in cycles per second (cps).

Hearing Protector - A device inserted into or placed over the ear for the purpose of reducing air-conducted sounds, e.g., ear plugs or earmuffs.

Hearing Threshold Level (HTL) - The amount the threshold of hearing exceeds a standard audiometric reference (units or decibels). Current levels are referenced to ANSI-1969 standard or ISO-1964 standard.

Hertz (Hz) - Unit of measurement of frequency, numerically equal to cycles per second.

Impulse of Impact Noise - A sound with a rise time of not more than 35 milliseconds to peak intensity and a duration of not more than 500 milliseconds to the time when the level is 20 dB below the peak. If the impulse recurs at intervals less than 1/2 second, they shall be considered as continuous noise.

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IX. GLOSSARY – continued

Intermittent Noise - A steady state or continuous signal which is interrupted by periods of silence or periods of noise at levels below 55 dBA. Intermittent noise does not vary by more than 40 dBA in 500 milliseconds.

Medical Pathology - A disorder, disease or condition affecting the ear, which should be treated by a physician specialist.

Noise - Disturbing, harmful or unwanted sound.

Noise Exposure Index - The integrated effect over a given time period at different noise levels and durations, often reported as a Dose.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss - The term used to refer to the slowly progressive inner ear hearing loss that results from exposure to continuous noise over a long time period as contracted to acoustic trauma or physical injury to the ear.

Otolaryngologist - A physician specializing in diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the ear, nose and throat.

Permanent Threshold Shift (PTS) - The component of threshold shift which shows no progressive reduction with passage of time when the apparent cause is removed.

Representative Exposure - Measurements of an employee's noise dose or 8-hour time-weighted average sound level that the employer deems to be representative of exposures of other employees in the work place.

Sound Level - Ten 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. Unit: decibels (dB). For use with this program, SLOW time response, in accordance with ANSI S1.4-1971 (R1976), is required.

Sound Level Meter (SLM) - An instrument used to measure noise and sound levels, comprised of a microphone, amplifier, rectifier, output meter, and optional frequency-weighting networks.

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

Steady-State Noise - Noises that are continuous or that consist of impulses spaced less than 0.5 seconds apart.

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

Threshold of Hearing - The lowest detectable level of audible sound reported as a function of frequency.

X. SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA STATUTES

The following is a summary of the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Article 105, Sections 5096-5100, regulating occupational noise.

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X. SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA STATUTES - continued

Sec. 5096 Exposure Limits for Noise

- A. When employees are subjected to excessive noise levels, feasible engineering or administrative controls shall be utilized. If such controls fail to sufficiently reduce the sound levels, personal protective equipment shall be provided and used.

Sec. 5097 Hearing Conservation Program

- A. The employer shall administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program whenever employee noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average sound level (TWA) of 85 dBA (the action level).
- B. Monitoring to determine levels of exposure is required when information indicates that any employee's noise exposure may equal or exceed the action level.
1. This monitoring requirement can be met by either area monitoring or personal monitoring that is representative of the employee's exposure.
 - a. The sampling strategy shall be designed to identify employees for inclusion in the hearing conservation program and to enable the proper selection of hearing protectors.
 - b. Where circumstances such as high worker mobility, significant variations in sound level, or a significant component of impulse noise make area monitoring generally inappropriate, representative personal sampling shall be used.
 2. Monitoring shall be repeated whenever a change in production, process, equipment, or controls increases noise exposures to the extent that:
 - a. Additional employees may be exposed at or above the action level.
 - b. The hearing protectors in use may be inadequate to accommodate the noise change.
 3. The monitoring may be observed by the affected employees or their representatives.
 4. The employer shall notify each employee exposed at or above the action level of the results of the monitoring.
- C. The employer shall establish and maintain an audiometric testing program by making audiometric testing available to all employees whose exposures equal or exceed the action level.
1. Audiometric tests shall be performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist, or other physician, or by a certified technician.
 2. The employer shall establish for each employee exposed at or above the action level, a valid baseline audiogram against which subsequent audiograms can be compared.

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X. SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA STATUTES - continued

3. Testing to establish a baseline audiogram shall be preceded by at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise. This requirement can be met by wearing hearing protectors which will reduce the employee's exposure to a sound level of 80 dBA or below.
4. The employer shall notify employees of the need to avoid high levels of non-occupational noise exposure during the 14-hour period immediately preceding the audiometric examination.
5. Baseline audiometric tests shall be performed at the time of the Pre-placement Physical Examination.
6. At least annually, after obtaining the baseline audiogram, the employer shall obtain a new audiogram for each employee exposed at or above the action level.

Sec. 5098 Hearing Protectors

- A. Employers shall make hearing protectors available to all employees exposed to 85 dBA TWA.
 1. Employers shall ensure that hearing protectors are worn by the employees.
 2. Employees shall be given the opportunity to select their hearing protectors from a variety of suitable hearing protectors provided by the employer. (In other words, you must offer at least two (2) types of suitable hearing protectors from which employees can choose, but three (3) is recommended – one (1) ear muff and two (2) types of ear plugs).
 3. The employer shall train the employees in the use and care of the hearing protectors.
 4. The employer shall ensure proper fitting and supervise the correct use of all hearing protectors.
 5. The hearing protectors used must attenuate (reduce) employee noise exposure to at least an 8-hour TWA of 90 dBA. For employees who have experienced a standard threshold shift, the hearing protectors must attenuate the exposure to at least an 8-hour TWA of 85 dBA.
 6. The adequacy of hearing protector attenuation shall be re-evaluated whenever employee noise exposures increase to the extent that the hearing protectors may no longer provide adequate attenuation.

Sec. 5099 Training Program

- A. The employer shall institute a training program for all employees exposed to noise at or above the action level, and shall ensure employee participation in the program.
 1. The training program shall be repeated annually for each employee included in the hearing conservation program.
 2. The training program must include:

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X. SUMMARY OF CALIFORNIA STATUTES - continued

- a. The effects of noise on hearing
 - b. The purpose of hearing protectors, the advantages/disadvantages and attenuation of various types, and instructions on selection, fitting, use and care.
 - c. The purpose of audiometric testing, and an explanation of the test procedures.
- B. The employer shall make available to affected employees or their representatives, copies of Article 105, and shall post a copy in the workplace. The employer shall provide to affected employees, any informational materials that are supplied to the employer by U.S. Department of Labor or Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Sec. 5100 Recordkeeping

- A. The employer shall maintain accurate records of:
- 1. Employee exposure measurements – retain for a minimum of 2 years.
 - 2. Audiometric tests – retain for the duration of the affected employee’s employment plus thirty (30) years.
 - 3. Audiometric test rooms – retain for the duration of the affected employee’s employment plus thirty (30) years.
 - 3. Training records – retain for three (3) years.
- B. All records required by this section shall be provided upon request to employees, former employees, and representatives designated by the individual employee.

