

PLAN REVIEW	
<i>Reviewer</i>	<i>Date</i>
Brian Parrie	10/17/2011
Lee Carlson	5/13/2014
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## HEARING CONSERVATION

### Purpose

Conservation of hearing is an important preventative measure at Ellsworth Public Schools. To reduce occupational hearing loss, all employees, who work in potentially noisy areas, are provided hearing protection, training and annual hearing tests. OSHA's hearing conservation standard is covered in [29 CFR 1910.95](#).

### Responsibilities

#### Management

- Use Engineering and Administrative controls to limit employee exposure
- Provide adequate hearing protection for employees
- Post signs and warnings for all high noise areas
- Conduct noise surveys annually or when new equipment is added
- Conduct annual hearing tests for all employees
- Conduct hearing conservation training for all new employees
- Conduct annual hearing conservation training for all employees

#### Employees

- Use school provided, approved hearing protection in designated high noise areas
- Request new hearing protection when needed
- Exercise proper care of issues hearing protection

#### Training

At time of hire and annually thereafter, all affected Employees must attend Hearing Conservation Training. The initial training is conducted as part of the New Hire



Orientation Program by the Human Resource Department and consists of:

1. Rules and procedures
2. Where hearing protection is required
3. How to use and care for hearing protectors
4. How noise affects hearing and hearing loss

### **Engineering Controls**

After it is determined that noise exposure above 85 dB(A) are present, engineering controls should be evaluated and implemented to reduce the noise exposure before administrative controls are initiated. Some examples of engineering controls include:

1. Noise reducing baffles
2. Compartmentalization
3. Installing noise reducing gears
4. Installing rubber pads under machinery

When new equipment or machinery are evaluated for purchase, the District's Hearing Conservation contact, should be consulted to conduct an evaluation from a Health and Safety standpoint. One criteria of the evaluation should include the amount of noise the equipment will produce and how it will affect the overall noise exposure.

### **Administrative Controls**

After engineering controls are evaluated for effectiveness or feasibility, administrative controls should be considered to reduce noise exposure. Administrative controls include restricting exposure time or using personal protective equipment (PPE).

Personal Protective Equipment, such as earplugs or muffs, may be used to reduce the amount of noise exposure. Each plug or muff has a noise reductions factor (NR) as evaluated by ANSI Standards (S3.19 - 1974 or Z24.22 - 1957). For example, if a work area has an ambient noise exposure of 96 dB(A), the hearing protectors should be rated 6 NR or better to be effective.

According to OSHA Regulations, each location with noise exposures of 85 to 89 dB(A) will provide hearing protectors for the Employee's optional use. Noise exposures at 90 dB(A) or above require the mandatory use of hearing protection. Further, OSHA requires that a variety of hearing protectors be available for Employees to choose (both a variety of plug and muff type hearing protectors).



## Types of Hearing Protectors

Hearing protection devices are the first line of defense against noise in environments where engineering controls have not reduced employee exposure to safe levels. Hearing protective devices can prevent significant hearing loss, but only if they are used properly. The most popular hearing protection devices are earplugs which are inserted into the ear canal to provide a seal against the canal walls. Earmuffs enclose the entire external ears inside rigid cups. The inside of the muff cup is lined with acoustic foam and the perimeter of the cup is fitted with a cushion that seals against the head around the ear by the force of the headband.

## Use of Hearing Protectors

Management, Supervision and Employees shall properly wear the prescribed hearing protectors while working in or traveling through any section of a Location that is designated a High Noise Area. (excluding offices, break rooms, and rest facilities). The following rules will be enforced:

Personal stereos, such as Walkman's, etc., will not be permitted in any operating area of school property.

Hearing protectors, at least two types of plugs and one type of muffs, will be provided and maintained by the School.

- ◆ Hearing protectors and replacements will be provided free of charge
- ◆ Hearing protectors will be properly worn at all times, except in offices, break rooms, rest facilities.

Pre-formed earplugs and earmuffs should be washed periodically and stored in a clean area, and foam inserts should be discarded after each use. It is important to wash hands before handling pre-formed earplugs and foam inserts to prevent contaminants from being placed in the ear that may increase your risk of developing infections.

