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**HEARING CONSERVATION OVERVIEW**

*Revised February 22, 2004*

In order to minimize the exposure of employees to hearing losses, a business must have a consistent, documented method in place to protect its employees and comply with the law (OSHA Act 29CFR1910.95)

The following is a brief outline of the requirements of a hearing conservation program:

1. **Noise Level Monitoring** – Employers must have a Hearing Conservation Program if employees are exposed to noise levels at or above 85 decibels (dB) over an eight-hour time-weighted average\* through the course of a normal work day. For example, a chain saw in operation can generate 115 dB or more.
2. **Audiometric Testing** – Hearing tests must be available at no cost to all employees who are continuously exposed to a noise level of 85 dB or above over time. Elements of a testing program are baseline (employee's first test) and annual audiograms, training, and follow-up procedures.
3. **Hearing Protection** – Two types of hearing protection (ear plugs, ear muffs) must be available to all employees (free of charge) exposed to noise levels of 85 dB or above.
4. **Training** – Employees exposed to noise levels of 85 dB or higher must have documented annual training in the use of protective equipment and the potential dangers of excessive noise.
5. **Recordkeeping** – Noise exposure measurement records must be retained for two years. Records of audiometric tests must be maintained for employees during their employment.

Any employee recording a change in hearing during follow-up testing must be informed in writing by the employer within 21 days. It is important to have a program in place and have baseline audiograms performed on all new employees. For more information, see OSHA 3074, "Hearing Conservation," or contact your area OSHA office, insurance representative, and physician.

\*Time-weighted average means an employee must be exposed to an average of 85dB or greater over an eight-hour shift.