

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES



Procedure Number: 30-7

Effective Date: 03/11/1994

Revision Date: 10/30/2003

C. Dulubau
County Administrator

SUBJECT: **HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE: **Risk Management**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to eliminate hearing damage to employees due to excessive work related noise.

II. SCOPE

Any Pima County employee whose occupational exposure to noise is equal to or exceeds a time weighted average (TWA) of 85 decibels (dB) shall be included in this program.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. **Risk Management**

1. The Risk Management Department, in cooperation with all affected departments/divisions within Pima County Government, will assist each workplace in determining if hazards are present or are likely to be present, which necessitates the use of hearing protection
2. Risk Management, upon request, will assist departments in training and implementation of a Hearing Conservation Program when indicated.
3. Risk Management will assist departments in providing medical surveillance for affected employees.

B. **Department/Division**

1. When department employees are exposed to high noise levels, noise exposure measurements must be taken. This monitoring may be done by Risk Management personnel or departmental

safety personnel. Results must be kept on site, and a copy forwarded to the Risk Management Department with a list of personnel placed in the Hearing Conservation Program.

2. Noise monitoring must be performed whenever a department experiences a change in production, process, equipment, or engineering controls decrease noise exposures to the extent that employees no longer need to be in the program.
3. Provide and maintain an adequate supply of Hearing Protection for all employees who will wear hearing protection for routine, or non-routine work.
4. Ensure that all employees wear hearing protection for jobs/tasks as required by Risk Management and/or safety.
5. Ensure that all affected employees are trained on hearing conservation annually, and maintain training records.

IV. GENERAL DISCUSSION

As defined by OSHA 29 CFR 1910.95, the Hearing Conservation Program consists of:

A. Engineering or Administrative Controls

1. Noise exposure measurement - when employees are exposed to high noise levels, serious damage can result. Noisy areas must be monitored to determine whether an employee working in the area will exceed an eight hour (TWA) time weighted average sound level of 85 decibels.
2. When feasible, engineering controls should be used to decrease sound levels. In general, noise control is feasible if the technology exists to accomplish it, if the technology as applied can be done without damaging the economic health of the department, and the control method does not jeopardize the operation.

B. Medical Surveillance

1. Employees to be included in Pima County's Hearing Conservation Program must be provided with a baseline audiogram with their pre-employment physical. The departments will advise new

employees that their baseline audiogram must be preceded by a 14 hour quiet period, with no exposure to workplace or non-occupational noise. The baseline audiogram serves as a comparison for future audiograms, determining hearing improvement or loss.

2. An audiogram must be conducted within one year of the baseline audiogram and yearly thereafter. By conducting hearing tests annually, and employees hearing ability can be identified, and if necessary, protective measures can be implemented to prevent further hearing loss. Loss of hearing ability is identified when a standard threshold shift (STS) has occurred. If an STS is identified, the employee will be notified in writing within 21 days of the exam. The employee will be retrained and refitted with adequate hearing protection, and shown how to use and wear them.
3. Information obtained about the employee's ability to hear may be needed years later to assess the validity of Workers Compensation cases. Therefore, an exit hearing test is recommended.

C. Hearing Protection

1. All Pima County personnel shall wear hearing protection when entering areas with noise levels of 90 dB(A) and above. These areas will be clearly marked with "**Hearing Protection Required**" signs.
2. Departments will provide a choice of at least three different types of hearing protection, i.e., two types of disposable plugs and one type of ear muff. The Department is responsible for ensuring that hearing protection is in stock, and supervisors are responsible for proper wear by their employees. Hearing protection shall be selected by the department Safety Officer, or Risk Management Loss Prevention Officer, or a qualified Industrial Hygienist. Hearing protection shall be capable of reducing noise exposure below 90 dB(A).

D. Training

1. Annual Training for personnel included in Pima County's Hearing Protection Program must be performed on an annual basis. This

training must include physiology of hearing, risks, engineering control options and information on types and application of hearing protection.

2. If an individual has experienced a standard threshold shift, their ability to hear has changed, they must be retrained.
3. Risk Management must provide training at the request of the department.
4. Training must be documented and training records maintained for each affected employee.