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HEARING CONSERVATION

I. INTRODUCTION

Some City employees may be exposed to excessive noise levels at work because of the duties they perform. These excessive noise levels may cause permanent hearing loss if engineering controls and/or personal protective equipment are not used. The intent of this regulation is to protect City employees from occupational exposure to excessive noise levels through the use of various control methods described below.

The loudness of noise is measured in decibels (dB). "Excessive noise" for the purpose of this regulation refers to 85 decibels and above for eight hours or the equivalent (Exhibit 6.011I). This regulation applies to employees who are exposed to excessive noise in the workplace.

II. NOISE LEVEL MONITORING

If an employee suspects they are being exposed to excessive noise at work they should notify their supervisor, who should contact Risk and Safety Services to arrange on-site monitoring to evaluate the noise levels in their workplace. After monitoring is performed, some employees may be required to wear hearing protection to perform specific tasks.

III. HEARING PROTECTION

Employees, identified through the monitoring process, who are exposed to excessive noise, shall wear hearing protection at all times when exposed to excessive noise levels. Alternatively, supervisors may require the use of hearing protection during any activity or in any area they suspect exposes employees to excessive levels of noise.

Departments shall make hearing protection available for employees use. Departments should consult with Risk and Safety Services to determine the best options for reducing noise levels in their workplace and to evaluate the adequacy of the hearing protection.

Employees shall be responsible for using and caring for their hearing protection in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines. If the employee has questions they should consult their supervisor or Risk and Safety Services.

The use of headphones, for purposes other than communication (i.e. to listen to music), in lieu of hearing protection shall be prohibited. Cotton and other unconventional materials shall not be used as hearing protection. All hearing protection provided must be marked with a noise reduction rating (NRR).

IV. AUDIOMETRIC TESTING

Each department shall provide the opportunity for employees who are exposed to excessive noise to have their hearing tested on an annual basis. Risk and Safety Services will facilitate and coordinate annual on-site audiometric testing for effected departments. When an employee experiences a significant change in their ability to hear, known as Standard Threshold Shift, they will have the opportunity to schedule an additional audiogram to confirm the previous results. Employees who experience a Standard Threshold Shift will be required to wear hearing protection.

V. TRAINING

Training is available in a variety of delivery methods for employees required to wear hearing protection or who are exposed to noise levels. Risk and Safety Services is a resource for hearing conservation questions and issues.