

# HEARING LOSS PREVENTION SAFETY PROGRAM

## 1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program is to outline a plan that will protect employees of the Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park & Recreation District (Park District) from the effects of exposure to excessive noise. This plan is developed in accordance with requirements outlined in the Washington Administrative Code, WAC 296-817.

## 2.0 TYPES OF HEARING PROTECTION

The following hearing protection is provided to employees of the Park District. Employees may select from the options listed below their choice of hearing protection in the size that fits them correctly.

- Disposable ear plugs, HP 32 decibel reduction rating, or minimum L&I safety rating.
- Ear muffs, HP 25 decibel reduction rating, or minimum L&I safety rating.

Hearing protection can be obtained through managers, supervisors, or lead workers.

## 3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 3.1 Park District

The Park District will provide the proper hearing protection equipment when such equipment is necessary to protect the health and safety of the employee. The District shall be responsible for the establishment of a Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program in accordance with DOSH requirements.

The Executive Director will appoint the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program Administrator who will be responsible for the development, documentation and administration of the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program.

### 3.2 Safety Committee

The Safety Committee is responsible for the following items as they relate to the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program:

- Maintain the program  
Once developed, review the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program periodically and make recommendations for changes as necessary.
- Input and Guidance  
Provide input and guidance as needed to identify potential areas in the workplace where hearing loss could occur, and offer guidance as to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Consultation  
Be available to employees and departments to assist with inquiries regarding hearing loss, training, personal protective equipment, and other related questions.

### **3.3 Program Administrator or designee**

In addition to the development, documentation and administration of the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program, the Program Administrator is responsible for the following:

- A. Identify potential hearing loss hazards in work place  
Evaluate the potential for hearing loss hazards in the work place and when there is need for use of hearing protection by employees who may be exposed. Identify where in the work place hearing loss could occur. Identify which pieces of equipment or machinery will require the use of hearing protection when being operated. This evaluation is especially important when there are changes in machinery or equipment.
- B. Hearing protection selection  
Determine when hearing protection is needed to carry out specific work and the appropriate type of protection that is needed. Ensure that it is available to each applicable employee.
- C. Scheduling annual audiometric testing  
Schedule hearing test for employees each years as outline in Section 6.0.

### **3.4 Department Supervisor**

Department Supervisors are responsible for the following items as they relate to the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program:

- A. Training employees  
Provide and schedule training to all potentially affected employees on an annual basis, including any employees new to the program who will be exposed to machinery or equipment that has been identified as requiring hearing protection.
- B. Providing equipment  
Supply the necessary equipment for hearing protection free of cost to their employees.
- C. Addressing employee concerns  
Listen to their employee's hearing and noise level concerns and address them as necessary.
- D. Notifying Program Administrator  
Communicate information to the Program Administrator when changes occur in their department related to the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program. This includes notification of when new equipment or machinery is being used.
- E. Annual requirements  
Ensure that applicable employees attend annual audiometric testing and training.
- F. Audiometric Testing Follow-Up  
Follow up with employees who are found to have a standard threshold shift. (See Section 6.)

### **3.5 Human Resource Manager**

The Human Resource Manager is responsible for the following items as they relate to the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program:

- A. Audiometric Testing  
Receipt of hearing test results from audiologist (as outlined in Section 6.0) including when an employee is found to have a standard threshold shift. Inform Department Supervisor when a stand threshold shift has occurred so follow up measures can be taken.
- B. Retain medical records  
Place audiometric test results in employee medical files and retain in accordance with WA State retention requirements.

### **4.0 REQUIRED HEARING PROTECTION**

Hearing protection is required when employees' job duties require them to use equipment with noise levels exceeding L&I safety standards, such as:

- mowers
- blowers
- power saws
- chippers
- other power equipment with excessive noise levels

In addition, hearing protection is strongly recommended for staff working indoor concerts and will be made available to them at no cost.

### **5.0 TRAINING**

Training will be provided to all employees exposed to noise above an 8-hour average of 85 decibels. Training will cover the following topics:

- Effects of noise on hearing.
- Purpose of hearing protectors, the advantage and disadvantages of various types, and instructions on how to use and care for them.
- Purpose of audiometric testing and how it is done.
- Employee access to noise measurement records.

The Park District's training program is outlined as follows:

- All affected employees must annually review the Hearing Loss Prevention Safety Program through District provided training.
- All affected employees will have seasonal training on personal protection equipment and equipment use.
- All affected employees will be provided with PPE including hearing protection equipment.
- Staff will be taught how to maintain hearing protection equipment and how to purchase new hearing protection equipment when needed.
- Seasonal staff will be provided hearing protection, training and proper care of hearing protection equipment at no cost.

## **6.0 AUDIOMETRIC TESTING**

Audiometric testing will be provided at no cost to employees whose noise exposure equals or exceeds an 8 hour average of 85 decibels. This includes all Park Services full-time staff members. In addition, audiometric testing will be offered free of charge to any other staff members who want to have their hearing checked.

The Program Administrator will be responsible for scheduling audiometric testing for employees. Audiometric testing will be conducted annually by a licensed or certified audiologist, ear, nose & throat physician (otolaryngologist) or audiology technician certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC). Audiometric testing for the Park District will be conducted by Industrial Hearing Services Inc. unless otherwise determined.

The initial test results of an employee will provide a baseline for future testing. After the baseline is established, annual testing will be done for all employees continuing to work in high noise areas, with results compared to their baseline test results. For the initial baseline test, employees will be instructed to avoid unprotected exposure to high noise levels at least 14 hours before testing is done.

Following the test, employees will be provided with the results of their individual audiometric exams. The complete test results of all employees taking the exam will be provided by the audiologist to the Human Resource Manager.

The audiologist will determine whether an employee has undergone a standard threshold shift. A standard threshold shift is defined as a drop in hearing ability of at least 10 decibels in three frequencies - 2000, 3000 or 4000 hertz. If a standard threshold is found, the employee will be notified in writing within 21 days of determination by the audiologist

The audiologist will inform the Human Resource Manager if a standard threshold shift is found in any employees. The Human Resource Manager who will convey this information to the Department Supervisor who will determine what follow up is needed. The following options are available:

- Make hearing protection mandatory for that employee.
- Re-test employee within 30 days (optional to employee).
- Re-fit and re-train employee in hearing protection.
- Refer employee to audiologist or ear, nose & throat specialist for further evaluation.
- Inform employee of the need for an ear exam if a medical cause unrelated to noise exposure is suspected.

For questions related to noise or audiometric testing, employees may contact the Program Administrator.

## **7.0 NOISE AREAS AND MEASUREMENTS**

To assess noise levels in Park District grounds and facilities, periodic measurements may be taken by the WA State Department of Labor & Industries and assess whether L&I standards are being met.

Employees may view noise measurement records by contacting the Program Administrator. These records will be kept in the Park Services office in accordance with WA State retention requirements.