City of Crystal Lake
Department of Public Works
Hearing Protection Policy

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Approved By:	**M. Magnuson**

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PURPOSE

The City of Crystal Lake Public Works Department has established this policy to protect employee's hearing by addressing the issues of evaluating the potential hazards of noise, communicating information concerning these hazards, and establishing appropriate protective measures for all employees. This policy is designed to meet the requirements of OSHA standard 1910.95, "Occupational Noise Exposure."

The City of Crystal Lake Public Works Department will administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program whenever employee noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) sound level of 85 decibels (dB) measure on the A scale (slow response) or, equivalently, a dose of fifty percent. This condition is implemented to meet the requirements of OSHA standard 1910.95.

Throughout a regular workday, employees may encounter short, intermittent, or unexpected noise exposures exceeding 85 dB. While these instances may not meet the criteria for time-weighted average noise exposure, they still pose potential hearing risks. Employees are expected to exercise good judgement and consider the necessity for hearing protection.

For purposes of the required OSHA standard 1910.95 hearing conservation program, employee noise exposures will be computed without regard to any reduction provided using personal protection equipment (PPE). An 8-hour time weighted average of 85 dB or a dose of fifty percent will also be referred to as the Action Level.

DEFINITIONS

- Decibel (dB) – A unit of measurement of loudness of sound.
- dBA – Decibel measurements read on the A-scale of a sound level meter. This scale more closely approximates human perception of sound levels.
- Exposed employees – Employees whose workday routine exposes them to workplace noise at or above the noise exposure limits as indicated in OSHA Table G-16 Permissible Noise Exposures.
- Hearing Protectors – Individually worn devices, such as ear muffs and ear plugs, which reduce noise levels.
- Table G-16- A table from OSHA standard 1910.95 which outlines permissible exposure limits for noise, see below:

TABLE G-16 - PERMISSIBLE NOISE EXPOSURES

Duration per day, hours	Sound level dBA slow response
8	90
6	92
4	95
3	97
2	100
1 1/2	102
1	105
1/2	110
1/4 or less	115

RESPONSIBILITIES

Management Responsibilities:

- Management shall implement all sections of this policy.
- Management will make available appropriate hearing protectors to employees for their occupational noise exposures.
- Management shall ensure that employees are correctly wearing hearing protectors by periodically monitoring employees during work duties.
- Management shall implement engineering and administrative controls to reduce noise exposure when applicable.

Employees Responsibilities:

- Employees shall attend all required occupational noise and hearing conservation trainings.
- Employees shall properly utilize and maintain their PPE as outlined within this policy.
- Employees shall follow all applicable portions of this policy while performing work duties.
- Employees will request new hearing protection when needed.
- Employees shall exercise proper care of issued hearing protection.

IDENTIFICATION OF NOISE EXPOSURE

Noise study assessments will be performed to identify work tasks, equipment, and areas that expose employees to noise at or above 85 dB over an 8-hour time-weighted average. The noise assessment shall be performed periodically to enable the proper selection of hearing protectors. Noise assessments may also be repeated whenever a change in, equipment or controls increases noise exposures. Employees who exposed at or above an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 dB in the results of the monitoring will be notified.

The most current noise assessment survey is accessible to employees on the employee intranet. The noise assessment is located on the *'Public Works'* page of the Intranet under the subheading *'information.'*

New or modified equipment with noise levels equal to or exceeding 85 dB must be evaluated for noise exposure. If noise levels are equal to or exceeding 85 dB, hearing protection is required.

Areas identified with noise levels equal to or exceeding 85 dB will post signs warn employees and visitors entering of the need for hearing protection. The identification sign will indicate that hearing protection must we worn when in the area. Signs will be placed where employees can readily see the warning, such as next to power switches. The sign will state "Hearing Protection Is Required While Working in this Area" or similar wording, as appropriate, see below for an example:



The need for hearing protection while employees are operating equipment or machinery identified with noise levels equal to or exceeding 85 dB is outlined using a Job Safety Analysis (JSA). The JSA assesses the need for PPE, such as hearing protection, by identifying specific hazards and outlining the PPE selection based on the hazards involved in operating specific equipment or machinery. Employees should refer to the Department of Public Works JSA Policy for detailed JSA guidelines.

ENGINEERING CONTROLS

To reduce worker exposure to noise, engineering controls and administrative controls shall be evaluated. Engineering controls should be evaluated to reduce the noise exposure before administrative controls are initiated.

Examples of engineering controls include:

- Noise reducing baffles
- Compartmentalization
- Installing noise reducing gears
- Installing rubber pads under machinery

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

Administrative controls shall be implemented to reduce noise exposure. Administrative controls include restricting exposure time or using PPE such as hearing protectors.

HEARING PROTECTORS

Hearing protectors protect employees against noise in environments if they are used properly where engineering controls have not reduced employee exposure to safe levels. Hearing protectors such as, but not limited to, ear plugs, earmuffs, and noise cancelling radio communication devices will be provided to employees. Hearing protectors will be considered appropriate if it limits employee's exposure to noise to under the OSHA personal exposure limit, as outlined in table G-16 in the OSHA 1910.95 standard. When noise sources are operating, employees shall wear their hearing protection devices regardless of exposure time.

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

AUDIOMETRIC TESTING

The City of Crystal Lake Public Works Department will administer a hearing conservation program where employees exposed noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) shall receive a baseline audiogram within 6 months of first exposure. This condition is implemented to meet the requirements of OSHA standard 1910.95

Additionally, employees exposed to hazardous noise must undergo annual audiometric testing to monitor changes in hearing. This condition is implemented to meet the requirements of OSHA standard 1910.95

TRAINING

Upon initial hiring employees will be trained in the hazards presented by excessive noise levels in the workplace, and the use and care of hearing protection devices. Training will be repeated annually for each employee.

Annual training will include:

- Effects of noise on hearing.
- Proper use, selection, and care of hearing protectors.
- Purpose of audiometric testing.

POLICY REVIEW

The City of Public Works Department will review the Hearing Protection policy on a 2-year cycle and update the policy as needed.