



## SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

### NUMBER 4.0 – NOISE AND HEARING CONSERVATION

Number: 4.0

Issued: 10/2018

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#### 1.0 **PURPOSE:**

To minimize the risk of hearing loss by identifying, mitigating and monitoring potential noise exposure risk areas at each Signature facility, to provide baseline and/or annual hearing tests to all employees to minimize the risk of noise exposure, and to comply with OSHA 29CFR 1910.95.

#### 2.0 **POLICY:**

SSG will establish and maintain a Hearing Conservation Program that includes monitoring noise created from plant operations and testing employees hearing on an annual basis.

#### 3.0 **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- A. It is the responsibility of the **Facility Leader** to ensure compliance with this procedure in its entirety.
- B. It is the responsibility of all **Employees** to follow the requirements of this procedure.

#### 4.0 **PROCEDURE:**

- A. Each facility shall have noise testing performed at their facility to determine the amount of noise created by plant operations. This testing will be performed by a qualified third party (certified industrial hygienist, insurance agency or environmental health and safety consultant) using a calibrated dosimeter. An octave band analyzer should be used to measure dB levels at 500, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 and 6,000 HZ levels. These results should be included with the plant wide noise survey.
- B. Noise testing must occur every other year, or when a noise level is suspected of changing at the facility, or any time there is a new piece of equipment added or removed. It is the Facility Leader's responsibility to ensure that the testing is performed, and the results are maintained in a safety notebook or electronic folder at the facility.
- C. Employees may observe the testing and must be notified of the results. Facility hearing test results are to be posted on the safety bulletin board.
- D. Any area of the facility determined to have a dB average in the 80 – 130 dB range over an 8-hour period, or 77-127 dB range over a 12-hour period, is to be considered a "hearing protection required" area. A sign shall be placed in full view of anyone entering that area to advise them that hearing protection must be worn in that area. Hearing protection must be provided in all hearing protection required areas to prevent employees or visitors from entering these areas without protection.
- E. All employees or visitors exposed to a noise level exceeding a dBA of 80 dB or higher must wear one of the following types of hearing protection: A) Pre-formed or molded earplugs, B) Waxed cotton, foam, or fiberglass earplugs, or C) Earmuffs (these need to make a perfect seal around the ear to be effective).
- F. All types of hearing protection must have a Noise Reduction Ratio (NRR) adequate to reduce the employees' noise exposure to less than 80 dBA (77 on a 12-hour shift). When reviewing the NRR for a specific hearing protection device, the NRR must be converted from a "C" weighted scale to an "A" weighted scale by subtracting seven from the NRR Rating. Remember, the best hearing protection is one that employees will wear. Be sure different styles and sizes are available.

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- G. In areas exceeding 100 dBA, an engineering control plan must be developed. The plan should address all possible safeguards that might reduce the noise level in that area. If noise cannot be mechanically reduced, then the employees must wear a combination of earplugs and earmuffs to achieve a hearing exposure level of less than 80 dBA.
- H. Annual hearing tests must be administered to all employees (hourly, salary, office and seasonal\*) to determine if there has been a standard threshold shift (STS) in an existing employee's hearing. (\*a seasonal employee is a temporary worker that is assigned to the facility more than two weeks)
- I. Newly hired employees will establish their baseline at their first annual test at the facility.
- J. An audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician must oversee the testing. A trained or CAOHC certified technician, audiologist or physician may perform the audiometric testing.
- K. Annual hearing tests must be done within one (1) year of the establishment of the baseline. It is the Facility Leader's responsibility to ensure that the annual testing is performed. Results of the annual hearing test should be maintained at the facility in a safety notebook or electronic folder at the facility.
- L. OSHA has determined that any STS greater than 10 dB to be significant and shall be addressed as follows:
  - 1) The employee must be notified within 21 days from the date the results were received by the facility leader.
  - 2) A retest may be conducted within 30 days and may replace the annual test.
  - 3) If the shift is permanent and above 25 dBA, then the hearing loss must be entered on an OSHA log as an illness. This shift is measured against the baseline, not the prior year test result.
- M. Failure to wear ear protection when required will be considered a violation of the safety rules, and the employee will be subject to normal progressive disciplinary procedures for the facility.
- N. Record Retention: Hearing records that include employees' name, duration of employment, job classification(s), date of audiogram(s), and examiners name must be retained for 30 years after employment.
- O. Employees failing to comply with this procedure will be disciplined in accordance with normal progressive disciplinary procedures for the facility.

**5.0 ATTACHMENT / FORMS:**

NONE

**6.0 PROCEDURE HISTORY**

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