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LAST REVISION: December 17, 2019	REVIEWED BY: L. Kirk Berglund, Safety Director	FORM REF No: SP-HEAR
SUBJ: Hearing Conservation		

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to provide a process to minimize employee-hearing loss caused by excessive occupational exposure to noise.

Scope

This program is applicable to all employees who may be exposed to noise in excess of 85 decibels (decibels). When work is performed on a non-owned or operated site, the operator's program shall take precedence, however, this document covers Meiners Electric employees and contractors and shall be used on owned premises, or when an operator's program doesn't exist or is less stringent.

Definitions

Audiometric testing - means detection by the person being tested of a series of pure tones. For each tone, the person indicates the lowest level of intensity that they are able to perceive.

Decibels – means the sound energy measured by a sound level meter using the “A” scale. The “A” scale is electronically weighted to simulate the response of the human ear to high and low frequency noise.

Slow Response – means the setting on the sound level meter that averages out impulses of brief duration that would cause wide fluctuation in the sound level meter reading.

Standard Threshold Shift – means a change in hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dB (corrected for age) at 2000, 3000 and 4000 Hz in either ear.

Key Responsibilities

Managers and Supervisors

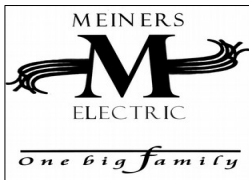
- Ensure requirements of this program are established and maintained.
- Ensure employees are trained and comply with the requirements of this program.

Employees

- Wear hearing protection when required, attend the training, and cooperate with testing and sampling.

Procedure

Occupational hearing loss is a cumulative result of repeated or continued absorption of sound energy by the ear; employee protection is based on reduction of the noise level at the ear or limiting the employee's exposure time. Meiners Electric shall offer hearing protection to all employees exposed to potential high noise levels in working areas and to those employees requesting hearing protection.



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Hearing Conservation Program and Participants

Employees exposed to noise of 85 dBA or greater are included in the hearing conservation program. If an employee is exposed to noise that is 85 dBA or louder on an eight hour time weighted average (TWA), then that employee must be in a hearing conservation program.

Noise Sampling/Monitoring Must be Performed

Noise measuring must be done to see if employees are being exposed to noise that is 85 dBA or louder on an eight hour time weighted average (TWA). This measuring can be either sampling performed when needed or monitoring performed all the time.

Surveys

Surveys will be conducted by a qualified employee or third party.

To evaluate noise exposure in terms of possible hearing damage, it is necessary to know the overall sound level ("A" scale measurement), the exposure time of the individual in hours per day and the length of time the individual has worked in the area being surveyed. This data shall be supplemented by the following:

- Name of area and location
- Date and time of survey
- Name of person conducting survey
- Description of instrument used, model and serial number
- Environmental conditions
- Description of people exposed

Meiners Electric shall notify each employee of their monitoring results, or, if their job is exposed to noise 85 decibels or greater.

A plot of noise levels must be made for owned facilities. The plot must be filed or posted at the facility.

Hearing protection is evaluated for the specific noise environments in which the protector will be used. Meiners Electric shall evaluate hearing protection for the specific noise environments in which the protector will be used.

All sound measuring equipment must be calibrated before and after each survey. Records of sound measuring equipment calibration and noise level surveys shall be kept for 20 years.

Noise Surveys must be repeated whenever changes in the workplace may expose additional personnel to high noise or hearing protection being used by employees may not be adequate to reduce the noise exposure to a level below 85 decibels.



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Sound Level Surveys

- All owned facilities that are suspected of having noise levels exceeding 85 decibels must be screened.

Exposure Surveys:

- A representative sampling of employees shall be conducted to determine the exposure to noise over a period of time.
- Noise dosimeters must be capable of integrating all continuous, intermittent and impulsive sound levels from 80 dB to 130 dB and must be calibrated so a dose of 50% corresponds to a time weighted average of 85 dB.

Signage

Clearly worded signs shall be posted at entrances to, or on the periphery of, areas where employees may be exposed to noise levels in excess of 85 decibels. These signs shall describe the hazards involved and the required protective actions.

Audiometric Testing

Audiometric testing is performed annually for individuals exposed to noise equal to or greater than 85 dBA, 8-hour time-weighted average. Employees who are exposed to noise that is 85 dBA or louder on an eight hour time weighted average (TWA) must have hearing tests (also called "audiograms" or "audiometric testing") available to them. These tests help by showing any hearing loss that might be happening and must be done every year after the baseline test.

Baseline Testing Guidelines

- Meiners Electric shall establish a baseline audiogram for each exposed employee within 6 months of their first exposure. A baseline, or initial, hearing test must be done within six months if an employee has been exposed to noise that is 85 dBA or louder on an eight hour time weighted average (TWA).
- Testing to establish a baseline audiogram shall be preceded by at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise.
- If Meiners Electric uses a mobile testing van for hearing tests, the baseline can be established within one year.

Standard Threshold Shift Guidelines

Employees are notified in writing within 21 days of determination of a standard threshold shift (OSHA definition of a standard threshold shift: "a change in hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dB or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz in either ear.").

Each employee's annual hearing test must be compared to the same employee's original baseline test. This is to see if a significant change, called a "standard threshold shift", has happened. If a standard



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threshold shift has happened, the employee who has had the standard threshold shift must be told in writing within 21 days of the test results coming out.

Hearing protection is re-evaluated in the event of a standard threshold shift. Unless a physician determines that the standard threshold shift is not work related or aggravated by occupational noise exposure, Meiners Electric shall ensure that employees already using hearing protectors shall be refitted and retrained in the use of hearing protectors and provided with hearing protectors offering greater attenuation if necessary.

The employee shall be referred for a clinical audiological evaluation or an otological examination, as appropriate, if additional testing is necessary or if Meiners Electric suspects that a medical pathology of the ear is caused or aggravated by the wearing of hearing protectors.

Required Recordkeeping

Records of employee exposure to noise are maintained. Accurate records of all employee exposure and audiometric measurements shall be maintained as required by the federal or state regulation.

Employee audiograms are considered medical/exposure records. These records must be kept for the length of employment plus 30 years.

Hearing Protection Devices

- Hearing protection is provided.
- Hearing protection shall be provided at no cost to employee(s). It shall be replaced as necessary.
- Meiners Electric shall ensure that hearing protectors are worn.

Training

Employees are provided annual training on the hearing conservation program. Training on the hearing conservation program must be given to employees at least one time every year.

The training must be updated to stay current with changes in Meiners Electric processes.

All training must and shall be documented.

All staff shall have a copy of this program, noise exposure procedures and it shall be posted at the worksite and a copy made available to all employees and their representatives if applicable.