

# Hearing Loss Prevention Program at Whitman College

## **Purpose**

This Hearing Loss Prevention Program is designed to protect employees from the effects of exposure to excessive noise at Whitman College and comply with the WISHA Hearing Loss Prevention Rule (Noise) WAC 296-817.

## **Noise Areas and Measurements**

No fixed location at Whitman College has been identified as exceeding the regulatory threshold of 85 dB.

The wood chipper has been identified as a mobile noise source which exceeds 85 dB. Use of the wood chipper requires establishment of a safety zone extending at least 10 ft. from the equipment in order to prevent unacceptable noise exposure for persons not using hearing protection devices. All employees within the safety exclusion zone must wear appropriate ANSI compliant hearing protection devices.

## Equipment Noise Measurements

Hearing protection is required when using any of the following equipment (single type or combination) for more than two hours per shift. Hearing protection is required at all times within 10 ft. of the wood chipper. Hearing protection is recommended at all times while using the listed equipment.

The data shown are maximum observed values. The hearing protection standard is based upon a time weighted average during an eight hour shift. The two hour per shift time limit provides for average noise exposure levels below the 85 dB threshold during an eight hour shift. Due to inconsistencies in materials processed, accurate measurement of wood chipper operations is infeasible. Hearing protection is therefore required for all employees who come within 10 ft. of the equipment during operations.

### Test Results for Whitman Equipment

Equipment	Operation Measured	Maximum dB
Lawn Mower John Deere 1445	Start up	89
	Blades moving	95
Grounds Mash 3000 D	Start up	88
	Blades moving	96
Tractor, John Deere	Idling	94
Lawn Mower Walker	Start up	87
	Blades moving	97
Weed Eater Shindaiwa	Idling	93
DR all Terrain Mower	Blades moving	91
Back Hoe (Large)	Idling	89
Chain Saw Stihl	Running	105
Blower, Stihl	Running	98
Edger	Operating	100
Metal Chop Saw	Operating	94
Impact Wrench	Operating	95
Angle Grinder	Operating	89
Bench Grinder	Operating	100
Chop Saw	Operating	94
Table Saw	Operating	90
Radial Arm Saw	Operating	94
Band Saw	Operating	89
Power Sander	Operating	87
Pneumatic Palm Sander	Operating	92
Skill Saw	Operating	93
Blitz Code Key cutter	Operating	89
Framon Code Key cutter	Operating	92
Duplicator Key cutter	Operating	97
Key stamping	Operating	102
Air hose	Operating	97
Bench Grinder	Operating	92
Welder	Operating	102

Wood Chipper	Operating	108
Garbage Truck	Operating door gears	88
Sniper carpet extractor	Idling	86

## Hearing Protection Equipment

The following hearing protection is provided to employees at (Add your company name) (list at least two kinds). Employees will be allowed to select their choice of hearing protection in the size that fits them correctly.

<u>Equipment Provided by Whitman</u>	<u>Sizes available (where applicable)</u>
3M or equivalent disposable foam ear plugs	One-size

Other types of ANSI compliant hearing protection equipment may be used if it provides sufficient protection to prevent exposures above 85dB. Contact Environmental Health and Safety for assistance in selecting and evaluating these devices.

Whitman provided hearing protection equipment is available at the Physical Plant building, adjacent to the auto shop.

## Audiometric Testing

Audiometric testing will be provided at no cost to all employees whose noise exposure likely may equal or exceed an 8 hour average of 85 decibels.

Audiometric testing will be provided within 180 days of assignment. These initial test results are the baseline results. Annual testing following these initial tests will be compared to the baseline test results for all employees enrolled in the program.

For baseline tests, employees will be instructed to avoid unprotected exposure to high noise levels at least 14 hours before testing is done.

If a standard threshold shift (*a drop in hearing ability of at least 10 decibels in three frequencies – 2000, 3000 or 4000 hertz*) is found, the employee may be retested within 30 days. (note: retesting is optional)

Employees will be provided with results of their individual audiometric exams. If a standard threshold shift is found, employees will be notified in writing within 21 days of determination.

If a standard threshold shift is found in any employees, the following will also be done:

- Employees not wearing hearing protection will be provided the required equipment.
- Employees already using hearing protection will be re-fitted and re-trained.
- Employees will be referred to audiologist or ear, nose & throat specialist for further evaluation.
- Employees will be informed of the need for an ear examination by their private healthcare provider if a medical cause unrelated to noise exposure is suspected.

Audiometric testing is conducted by a licensed or certified audiologist, ear, nose & throat physician (otolaryngologist) or audiology technician certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation.

Audiometric testing for Whitman Employees is conducted by Providence St. Mary's Occupational Medicine, Walla Walla, Washington.

## **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:

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

## **Access to Records**

The most current noise measurement records may be obtained from Environmental Health and Safety.

Personal audiometric exam results will be mailed directly to individual employees from the testing provider.

Contact Environmental Health and Safety to request test updates, or to schedule testing of new equipment.