



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures – 2.3 Hearing Conservation



HEARING CONSERVATION

Effective: March 16, 2018
 Scheduled Review: March 27, 2021
 Replaces: 216 Hearing Conservation
 Approved: Interim Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to develop and implement a Hearing Conservation Program (HCP) that will be used as an organizational mechanism to comply with Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) regulation Part 380 and NFPA 1500 to prevent occupational hearing loss for all Ann Arbor Fire Department (AAFD) employees. This policy establishes actions outlined within this guideline that are intended to ensure AAFD personnel function in an environment that will not adversely affect their hearing abilities considering the nature of their work of the AAFD.

II. NOISE EXPOSURE

MIOSHA requires that all employers in the State of Michigan to monitor noise exposure levels in a manner that will accurately identify all employees who are exposed to noise at or above 85 dB averaged over 8 working hours, or an 8-hour TWA (Time Weighted Average).

AAFD Safety Officer or his/her designee shall periodically check sound levels at the fire stations and during training evolutions using the department decibel meter to evaluate sound/noise levels.

- A. Emergency Traffic Response
 - i. Fire apparatus windows shall be closed when responding emergency traffic.
 - ii. For apparatus weighing more than 26,001 lbs., hearing protection shall be worn when responding emergency traffic.
- B. Emergency Scene Operations
 - i. When operating at emergency scenes where hearing protection is impractical or hearing protection may pose a greater danger to the member’s safety, hearing protection may be removed. An example would be wearing a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) including face piece or a fire helmet.
- C. Pump Panel Operation
 - i. Members operating at an engine or aerial’s pump panel should wear hearing protection.
- D. Training Evolutions
 - i. Members operating power or striking equipment while in training evolutions shall wear proper hearing protection, where applicable.
 - ii. All gasoline-powered equipment emit loud noise that can cause damage to hearing. Hearing protection shall be worn by all members when operating such equipment.
 - iii. Pump panel operation
 - 1. Members operating at an engine or aerial’s pump panel should wear hearing protection.



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E. Station Operations

- i. Members working in high noise environments as identified by the department safety officer shall wear proper hearing protection. This includes areas within the fire stations such as all lawn maintenance including grass mowing, weed whacking, edging, or blowing.
- ii. Hearing protection shall be worn by persons in the immediate area while filling any SCBA air cylinders or operation of the breathing air compressor.

III. MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Baseline Audiometric Testing

As a part of the entry-level medical examination, a member shall be required to have a baseline audiogram performed. This baseline audiogram will become part of the member's permanent medical history file and will be used throughout his/her tenure with the department to monitor any changes in his hearing.

B. Annual Audiometric Testing

An audiometric test shall also be conducted as a part of the annual medical evaluation, and the results will be included in the member's medical history file.

- ### C. These programs will be provided at no cost to employees. All testing will meet or exceed MIOSHA requirements and be performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist, or other physician, or by a technician who is certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation, or who has satisfactorily demonstrated competence in administering audiometric examinations, obtaining valid audiograms, and properly using, maintaining and checking calibration and proper functioning of the audiometers being used.

IV. AAFD REQUIREMENTS

AAFD shall make hearing protectors available to all employees exposed to an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels or greater at no cost to the employees. Hearing protectors shall be replaced as necessary with approval from the shift battalion chiefs.

A. AAFD shall provide options for hearing protection.

- i. Each member will be issued one set of OSHA-approved noise canceling ear muffs. Personal hearing protection in the form of earplugs shall be made available to all personnel as a secondary protection.
- ii. Current vehicles with noise control/communication devices are compliant to be available for use.
- iii. AAFD should attempt to design and implement for new fire apparatus a noise control/communications system.

B. Annual Refresher Training

- i. Annual refresher training will be provided to all personnel to explain the health problems that occur from excess noise.