HEARING CONSERVATION

Effective:	August 6, 2021
Scheduled Review:	August 6, 2024
Approved:	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. This policy establishes actions outlined within this guideline that are intended to ensure personnel function in an environment that will not adversely affect their hearing abilities considering the nature of their work.

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).

City Safety Unit will periodically check sound levels at the fire stations and during training evolutions using a decibel meter.

Emergency Traffic Response - Fire apparatus windows shall be closed when responding emergency traffic. For apparatus weighing more than 26,001 lbs., hearing protection shall be worn when responding emergency traffic.

Emergency Scene Operations - When operating at emergency scenes where hearing protection is impractical or hearing protection may pose a greater danger to the Employee'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.

Pump Panel Operation - Employees operating at a pump panel should wear hearing protection.

Training Evolutions - Employees operating power or striking equipment while in training evolutions shall wear proper hearing protection

Station Operations - Employees 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.

III. MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

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

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 employee's medical history file. 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.   HEARING PROTECTION

Hearing protection will be made 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. Each employee 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. Vehicles with noise control / communication devices are available for use. Annual refresher training will be provided to all personnel to explain the health problems that occur from excess noise.