

A Summary of Requirements for General Industry

- 1) **Monitor** the sound levels in the workplace to determine the exposure levels of the employees. If any employee is exposed at or above an eight-hour time-weighted average (TWA) of 85 decibels (dBA) for one or more days per year, proceed with the remaining steps.
- 2) **Obtain** a baseline audiogram (within six months of initial exposure or one year if using a mobile test van) for each employee exposed. Be sure to notify employees that the baseline audiogram must be preceded by 14 hours without exposure to high noise levels (e.g., chain saws, lawn mowers, blowers, gunfire, loud music, etc.).
- 3) **Obtain** a new audiogram for these employees at least annually thereafter.
- 4) **Compare** each employee's annual audiogram to his/her baseline audiogram. If the annual comparison shows that an employee has suffered a standard threshold shift (STS), a retest may be obtained within 30 days and the retest may be taken as the annual audiogram (optional). By doing this, you may discover an employee was suffering from a temporary shift due to a cold.
- 5) **Inform** each employee who has suffered an STS (average of 10 dBA loss in either ear at 2,000, 3,000 and 4,000 hertz) that a shift has occurred. Notification must be done in writing and within 21 days of determination.
- 6) **Record** each STS as a work-related illness on the OSHA-300 within six days of the determination. If a physician determines that the STS isn't work-related or if a retest done within 30 days shows an STS doesn't exist, cross out the entry. When a persistent STS is found, substitute the annual audiogram for the baseline audiogram.
- 7) **Require** hearing protection be worn by all employees whose exposures exceed 90 dBA for an eight-hour TWA, as well as all employees exposed at or above 85 dBA (for 8-hour TWA) who have sustained an STS.
- 8) **Make** hearing protection available to all employees whose exposures exceed 85 dBA for an eight-hour TWA. It's best practice for any employee with exposure at or above 85 dBA to wear hearing protection. Provide a variety of hearing protection (at least two ear plugs and a muff).
- 9) **Train** employees exposed at or above 85 dBA at least annually on the:
 - a) Effects of noise on hearing
 - b) Purpose of hearing protectors
 - c) Advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types of hearing protection
 - d) Instructions for selecting, fitting, using, and caring for hearing protectors
 - e) Purpose and explanation of the process for audiometric testing
- 10) **Post** a copy of the noise standard (29 CFR 1910.95) in the workplace to enable employee review.