



# OCCUPATIONAL NOISE EXPOSURE

Occupational noise exposure is a significant health hazard in many workplaces. Employees are often exposed to different types and different levels of noise. If you do not know what noise level district employees are being exposed to, there can be hearing damage to the employee and could result in significant costs to your district. To help protect both the employee and the district, we have listed below some best practices for you to follow.

The first step to knowing if your district has noise exposure is through noise monitoring. Noise monitoring can assist the district in learning the approximate noise levels of the environment and specific pieces of equipment. As a best practice, any noise levels that are 85 decibels (dBA) or higher will need to have further monitoring. If the noise levels are below 85 dBA, periodic monitoring should be continued as the equipment gets older or if an employee's job duties or the environment changes.

## **SOME EXAMPLES OF EXPOSURES COULD INCLUDE:**

- Employees using leaf blowers, mowers, or weed eaters for more than 4 hours a day
- Working in blower rooms for extended periods of time
- Using chainsaws for longer than 30 minutes in any single day
- Using a concrete cutter for longer than 3 hours in a day

If further monitoring is needed, SDAO/SAIF can provide Dosimeter Testing. This device is worn by the affected employees during their work shift. The Dosimeter records noise throughout the day and provides the Time Weighted Average (TWA) for the employee. If the TWA is over 85 DBA, the district must implement a hearing conservation program. If the TWA is 90 dBA or greater, the district must consider engineering controls or administrative controls to reduce the noise to a safe level. If these controls are insufficient to reduce exposure below 90 DBA, the district must provide personal protective equipment.

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR MEMBERS THAT EXPOSURES OVER 85 DBA:**

- Identify noise levels of equipment suspected of being "loud"
- Look at Engineering & Administrative Controls to reduce noise levels or limit the exposure to employees
- Keep equipment well-maintained and follow manufacturer's recommendations
- Replace old equipment
- Have hearing protection available to employees e.g. ear plugs and/or earmuffs
- Implement a Hearing Conservation Program with annual training and audiometric testing

If you think you might have a noise exposure at your district or would like further information, please do not hesitate to call the Risk Management Department at **800-285-5461** or email **[riskmanagement@sdao.com](mailto:riskmanagement@sdao.com)**.