

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE  
HEARING PROTECTION POLICY

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## **Hearing Protection Policy**

The Providence College Hearing Protection Policy is that any worker who is exposed to loud noise during the course of performing his duties shall wear hearing protection in order to prevent damage to their hearing abilities. Per OSHA regulations, hearing protection, in the form of ear plugs or ear muffs, shall be provided to the employee at no cost.

OSHA also states that whenever employee noise exposures equal or exceed an 8 hour time weighted average (TWA) noise level of 85 decibels they shall be entered into an audiometric hearing test program. Hearing protection is required any time an employee is exposed to loud noise exceeding 85 decibels, regardless of the length of time exposed. The only difference is it must last a full 8 hour shift in order to be entered into the audiometric testing program. For instance, if you were to operate a table saw for 10 minutes, and the table saw operated at 85 decibels (or more), hearing protection should be worn for that period.

A combination of testing, observation, and consultation with both employees and supervisors has allowed us to decide who should be included in the audiometric testing program. Although many employees are exposed to loud noise for short periods of time, and hearing protection should be worn during those activities, only the power plant employees and grounds crew are participating in the audiometric testing program. The location of their work (power plant), as well as the nature of their work (weed wacking, mowing, leaf blowing), helped guide our decision. And although the exposure time was not always an entire 8 hour shift, it occurred often enough and loud enough to be included in the program for safety's sake.

Some other examples of work areas and job descriptions where hearing protection should be used include mechanical and compressor rooms, the Italy Street garage, and the carpenter shop. Keep in mind, people differ in their sensitivity to noise. An employee is aware of when their duties include a period of loud noise exposure. And it is not feasible to monitor noise levels for all employees at all locations throughout each day. Therefore, hearing protection should be made available upon request. As a general rule, noise may damage your hearing if you are at arm's length and have to shout to make yourself heard. Duration of the noise makes no difference as to whether or not hearing protection is needed, although the longer you are exposed to loud noise, the more damaging it may be. Also, the closer you are to the source of intense noise, the more damaging it is.