Noise Audits - Introduction

The 2003 revised Hearing Loss Prevention/Noise Rule includes a new section on noise audits.

The following three modules provide information on noise audits:

- ✓ Module 1 is a general overview of noise audits.
- ✓ Module 2 provides noise audit training.
- ✓ Module 3 also provides noise audit training and describes how to do a noise audit.

To see the new Noise Rule, click here

Module Objectives

These three noise audit modules will provide you the information and skills to:

- Describe the effect of noise exposure
- Identify different types of hearing protection
- Evaluate the proper fit of hearing protectors
- Take noise measurements and do basic noise exposure calculations
- Complete noise audit records for documentation

Module 1

Noise Audit General Overview

Module 1 covers the following:

What is a noise audit?

When is a noise audit required?

Who can do a noise audit?

How often is a noise audit done?

What is covered in a noise audit?

What kind of audit records must be kept?

What are the benefits of a noise audit?

What is a noise audit?

A noise audit is:

- A tool to evaluate your hearing loss prevention program when annual audiometric testing isn't feasible.

- A survey of your employees exposed to noise to check:
  - ✓ noise levels
  - ✓ type of hearing protection used
  - ✓ proper use of hearing protection

When is a noise audit required?

Never - Noise audits are optional

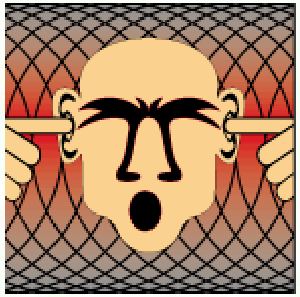
The noise audit option in the new(2003) Hearing Loss Prevention/Noise Rule is:

- ✓ An alternative to audiometric testing if employees work for you less than one year,
- ✓ An alternative to audiometric testing if employees are exposed to noise for less than one year,
- ✓ Useful for temporary employees and short-term construction projects.

To see noise audit option in new noise rule, click here

Purpose of a Noise Audit

A noise audit should answer the following:



- Has employee noise exposure changed?

- Is hearing protection appropriate for current conditions?
- Is hearing protection worn properly?

- Are employees satisfied with the comfort and protection of their hearing protection?

Noise Audit Training

If you decide to do noise audits you must have:

Either:

certification by Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC),

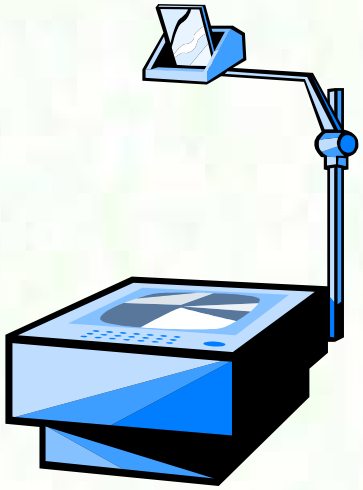
Or: similar training on specific topics.

To go to CAOHC web page, click on image

CAOHC offers a 20-hour course to obtain certification (see their webpage).

Noise Audit Training

Noise audit training must cover the following topics:



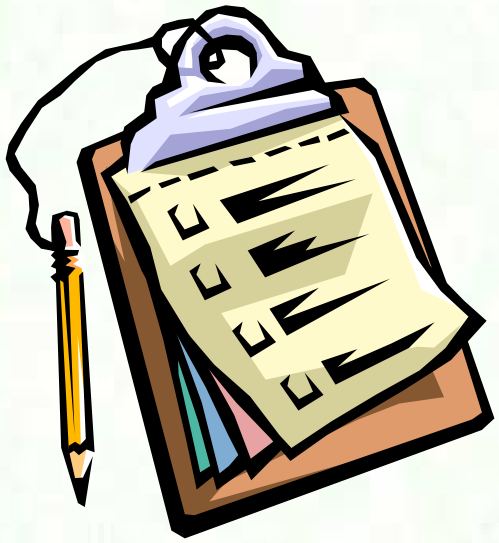
- Noise and hearing loss prevention
- Washington state noise regulations
- Hearing protectors
- Fitting of hearing protectors
- Conducting basic noise measurements
- Hearing loss prevention record keeping

Modules 2 & 3 cover this training

How Often Are Noise Audits Done?

If you decide to do noise audits, they must be done as follows:

- At least quarterly,
- More often if conditions or employees change frequently,
- But not more often than monthly as long as you:
  - ✓ cover the activities with greatest exposure
  - ✓ cover as many employees as possible
  - ✓ assess noise exposures and hearing protection for a full shift.

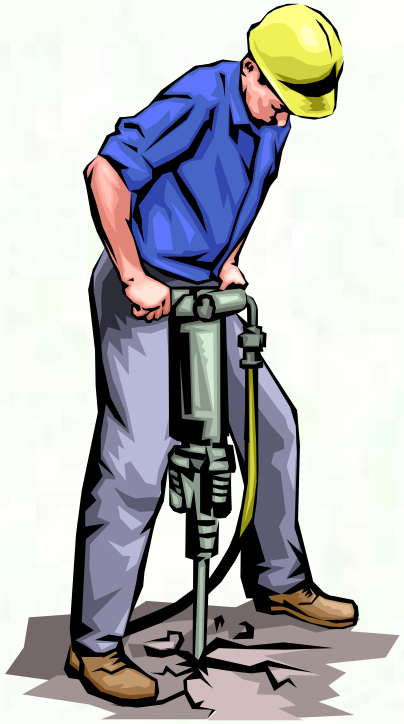


Who is Checked in a Noise Audit?

Check the following employees during a noise audit:

All workers you know or suspect are exposed to noise above 85 decibels and:

- ✓ are present on the day of the audit,
- ✓ are working at normal or full production.



What to check in a noise audit

Check noise levels and changes in employee noise exposure

Check noise levels with a sound level meter in noisy areas where employees work.

Compare to previous noise survey. (An initial survey is required.)

Determine if worker's noise exposure has changed.

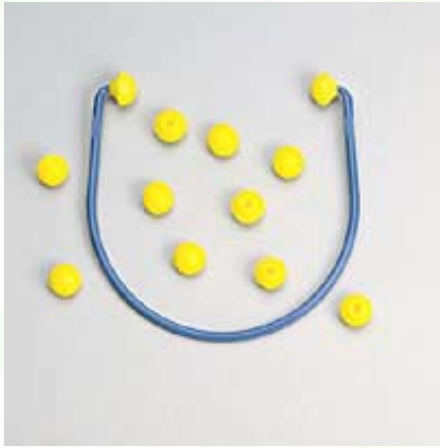
For more information on doing a noise survey, see module 3

What to check in a noise audit

Check for Appropriate Hearing Protection

Do the earmuffs or earplugs provide enough protection?

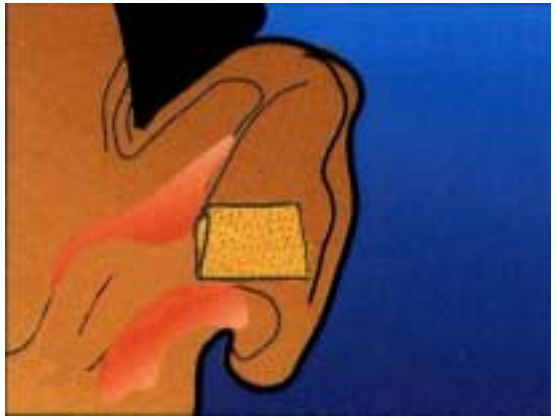
Are the plugs, muffs or earcaps best for the job or employee?



What to check in a noise audit

Is hearing protection worn properly?

Correct



Incorrect

Are ear plugs inserted properly?

Are earmuffs in good condition?

Is hearing protection worn at all times in noisy areas?

What to check in a noise audit

Are employees satisfied with hearing protection?

Employees will not likely wear hearing protection that is uncomfortable.

Worksite conditions and worker's choice dictate what kind of hearing protection is accepted.

Some workers may complain that over-protective hearing protection interferes with communication and safety.

Noise Audit Recordkeeping

Noise audits must be documented

- Audit records must be kept for each employee you checked as long as they work for you.

- The following must be included in the records:
  - ✓ make & model of hearing protectors,
  - ✓ size of protectors,
  - ✓ average noise exposure,
  - ✓ any problems found with protectors,
  - ✓ any comments from employees about protectors.

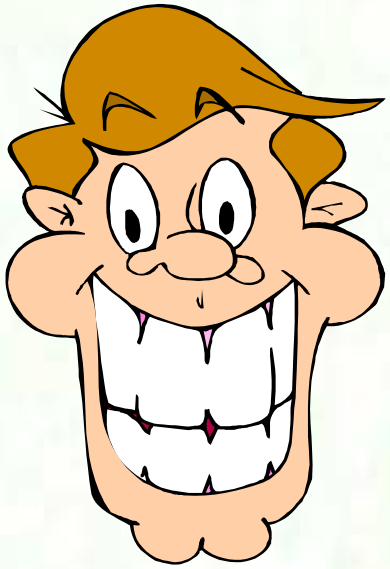
Noise Audit Follow-up

Hearing protection deficiencies must be corrected

- Hearing protection must be replaced if it:
  - ✓ is the wrong size
  - ✓ doesn't fit properly
  - ✓ is soiled, damaged or broken
  - ✓ is uncomfortable to employee
  - ✓ is not protective enough (noise level changed)

- You must assure your employees use the hearing protectors that provide them proper protection.

Benefits of Noise Audits

Noise audits can help your bottom line by:

- Preventing hearing loss in employees,
- Reducing your liability from hearing loss claims,
- Preventing possible WISHA citations for inadequate use of hearing protection,
- Increasing worker morale.