

## **HEARING CONSERVATION (FIRE/EMS, MAINTENANCE, PWD, & LAW ENFORCEMENT)**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Staff will learn hearing conservation regulatory requirements
- Staff will review the organization's hearing conservation policy

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates that 30 million Americans are exposed to hazardous noise on the job, resulting in permanent hearing loss to about 10 million workers and partial hearing loss to many more millions. Noise induced hearing loss is 100% preventable but once acquired, hearing loss is permanent and irreversible.

### **OCCUPATIONAL NOISE EXPOSURE**

- Noise or unwanted sound is one of the most pervasive occupational health problems.
- Exposure to high levels of noise causes hearing loss, the extent of damage depends on the intensity of the noise and the duration of exposure.
- Noise induced hearing loss can be temporary or permanent:
  - Temporary hearing loss results from short-term exposures to noise with hearing returning to normal after a period of rest.
  - Permanent hearing loss is generally caused by prolonged exposure to high noise levels over a period of time.

### **MONITORING**

- OSHA's hearing conservation program requires employers to monitor noise exposure levels to accurately identify employees exposed to noise at or above 85 decibels (dB) over an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA).

## **AUDIOMETRIC TESTING**

- Audiometric testing is required for all employees having an occupational exposure to noise. They monitor an employee's hearing over time; it also provides an opportunity for employees to educate employees on hearing conservation.
- Employers need to make audiometric testing available at no cost to employees who are exposed to noise level of 85dB or above.
- The first test is known as a "Baseline". The baseline audiogram is referenced audiogram against future audiograms for comparison.
  - Employer must provide a baseline audiogram within 6 months of an employee's first exposure at or above 85 dB and annually thereafter.

## **HEARING PROTECTORS**

- An employer is required to provide hearing protectors to all employees exposed to noise levels of 85 dB or above over an 8 hour TWA.
- Employees must wear hearing protectors if exposed to noise at or greater than 90 dB.
- Employer should provide employees with a selection of protector.

## **POLICY**

*Discuss all policies and procedures related to hearing conservation.*

## **CLOSING**

- *Encourage discussion about the presentation, OSHA hearing conservation requirements, and measures you can take to prevent hearing loss.*