

City of Urbandale

Hearing Conservation Policy



1. **Purpose.** This policy was created to protect City employees from the harmful effects of occupational noise exposure. Noise, or unwanted sound, is one of the most pervasive occupational health problems. Noise-induced hearing loss can be temporary or permanent. Generally, prolonged exposure to high noise levels over a prolonged period gradually causes permanent hearing damage.

A copy of this policy is available to all employees and can be found online at www.urbandale.org/Safety or by contacting the employee's supervisor, the department's Safety Leadership team member(s) or the Director of Risk Management/Support Services.

2. **Policy Administration.** The Director of Risk Management/Support Services shall be responsible for annually evaluating the hearing conservation policy. Department supervisors shall be responsible for monitoring noise levels and for selecting the appropriate hearing protection.

Employees are accountable for the proper care, maintenance and proper use of hearing protection assigned by their department. Questions or comments on this policy should be referred to the Director of Risk Management/Support Services or the department Safety Leadership representative(s).

3. **Protective Equipment Required.** Employees should wear hearing protection when:

- Are subjected to sound levels equal to or exceeding an 8-hour Time-Weighted-Average (TWA) of 85 decibels.
- Experienced a permanent Standard Threshold Shift based on an annual hearing test.
- Working in a location or with a piece of equipment with sound levels at or greater than 90 decibels.
- Working with/around noise at or greater than 85 decibels and want to ask for hearing protection.

Employees will be given suitable hearing protection at no cost and are accountable for properly using and maintaining the hearing protection.

4. **Engineering and Administrative Controls.**

- 4.1. Noise Audits:

- 4.1.1. Audits may be conducted by using either a software application (App) on an electronic device or a decibel meter.
- 4.1.2. Locations and equipment within a department that are known to exceed the OSHA threshold or that are perceived to be louder than normal talking noise shall be audited bi-annually to determine decibel levels.

4.1.3. All locations and equipment that exceed the 85-decibel limit shall be marked to notify employees of the risk.

4.1.4. Audits shall be retained for at least 2 years.

4.2. Hearing Conservation Training:

4.2.1. All positions that work in a location or with equipment that exceeds the 85-decibel limit shall be trained annually on hearing conservation.

4.3. Hearing Tests:

4.3.1. Shall be performed on all employees whose position is exposed to or exceeds an 8-hour time-weighted-average (TWA) of 85 decibels.

4.3.2. Hearing tests shall be provided at no cost to the employee.

4.3.3. Hearing tests shall be conducted annually after obtaining the baseline audiogram for each employee exposed at or above an 8-hour TWA of 85 decibels.

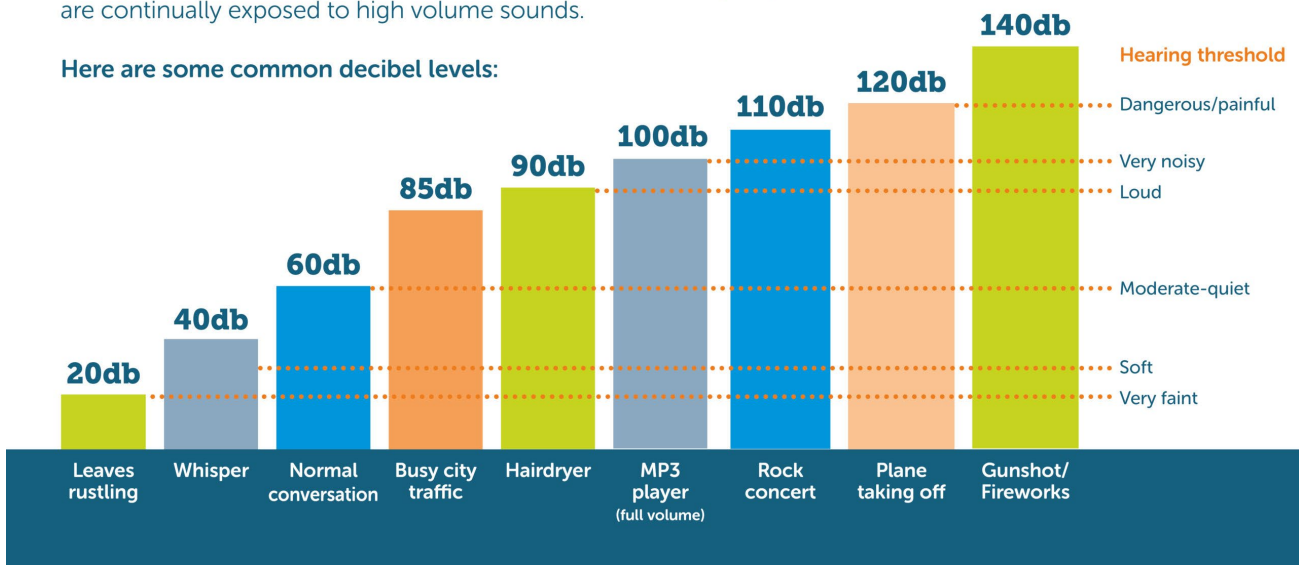
4.3.4. Hearing tests shall be retained for the duration of the employee's employment.

4.3.5. Hearing test results shall be shared with the employee promptly after test results are received and when requested by the employee.

How loud is too loud?

Government research suggests the safe exposure limit is **85 decibels** for **eight hours a day**. Your hearing could be at risk of damage if you are continually exposed to high volume sounds.

Here are some common decibel levels:



APPENDIX B – ANNUAL HEARING TEST REQUIRED BY POSITION

Community Development:

- Building Inspector
- Building Inspector II

Engineering

- Engineering Technician
- Senior Engineering Technician

Fire Department:

- Fire Captain
- Fire/EMS Lieutenant
- Firefighter/EMT
- Firefighter/Paramedic
- Driver/Engineer

Parks & Recreation:

- Horticulture Technician
- Parks Laborer
- Turf Specialist

Public Works

- Heavy Equipment Operator
- Light Equipment Operator
- Mechanic
- Public Works Laborer
- Sewer System Operator
- Solid Waste Collection Operator

Water Utility:

- Distribution Supervisor
- Distribution Operator
- Backflow Coordinator