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Noise and Hearing Conservation

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Section II: What standards limit and control noise exposure?

OSHA has established noise exposure standards in order to protect the hearing of employees. Other federal agencies and organizations have established similar criteria. The following sections provide an overview of these standards:

- [General Industry - 1910.95](#)
- [Construction Industry](#)
- [Other Standards and Guidelines](#)



General Industry - 1910.95 TOP

This standard is designed to protect general industry employees, such as those working in the manufacturing, utilities, and service sectors. It does not cover the construction or the oil and gas well drilling and servicing industries.

- [1910.95](#), Occupational Noise Exposure (See [References](#))

The standard establishes permissible noise exposures and outlines requirements according to two primary sections:

- (1) Engineering and Administrative Controls
- (2) Hearing Conservation Program

[Additional information](#) (App II:A) on the general industry standard is also available.

Construction Industry TOP

OSHA standards for noise in the construction industry:

- [1926.52](#), Occupational Noise Exposure (See [References](#))
- [1926.101](#), Hearing Protection (See [References](#))

Permissible Noise Exposures and Engineering and Administrative Controls

- Requirements for permissible noise exposures and controls under the construction standard are the same as those in the general industry standard. [[1910.95](#)]

Hearing Conservation Program

- In all cases where the sound levels exceed the values shown in Table D-2, a continuing, effective hearing conservation program shall be administered. [[1926.52\(d\)\(1\)](#)]
- There are no specific provisions for the hearing conservation program in construction.



Other Standards and Guidance TOP

[The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists \(ACGIH\)](#) has established exposure guidelines for occupational exposure to noise in their Threshold Limit Values (TLVs). The following is a summary of these limits:

- Exposures are based on a 3 dBA exchange rate.
- The PEL is 85 dBA. Based on the 3 dBA exchange rate, allowable TLVs for noise range from 80 dBA for a 24-hour period to 139 dBA for 0.11 seconds.
- No exposure to continuous, intermittent, or impact noise in excess of a peak C-weighted sound level of 140 dB is

allowed.

- A hearing conservation program is required when workers are exposed to noise above the TLV levels.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends the following noise exposure criteria [[Criteria for a Recommended Standard: Occupational Noise Exposure](#), NIOSH Publication No. 98-126, (1998, June)]:

- An eight hour TWA limit of 85 dBA, with a 3 dBA exchange rate.
- Implementation of a hearing conservation program at an eight hour TWA of 85 dBA.
- Using hearing protection for exposure that equals or exceeds 85 dBA as an eight hour TWA.
- Reduction of expected performance of hearing protectors (25 percent for muffs, 50 percent for formable plugs, and 70 percent for other plugs).

Other Federal Agencies with Noise Standards

The following noise standards are examples only. Refer to the respective agency for complete requirements.

- US Department of Defense (DoD)
 - [DoD Hearing Conservation Program \(HCP\)](#) [135 KB PDF, 25 pages]. Instruction Number 6055.12, (2004, March 5).
- US Department of Labor (DOL)
 - Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA)
 - [Health Standards for Occupational Noise Exposure](#)
- US Department of Homeland Security
 - Coast Guard
 - [Recommendations on Control of Excessive Noise](#) [93 KB PDF, 26 pages]. Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular No. 12-82, (1982, June 2).
- US Department of Transportation (DOT)
 - Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)
 - [49 CFR 393.94](#), Interior noise levels in power units [147 KB PDF, 2 pages].
 - Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
 - [49 CFR 229.121](#), Locomotive Cab Noise [161 KB PDF, 1 page].
- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - [40 CFR Part 211](#), Product Noise Labeling

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