



## Hearing Conservation Program

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Effective: December 11, 2007

Reviewed: April 6, 2011

Revised: April 6, 2011

### **I. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide appropriate guidelines to minimize the potential for occupationally related noise-induced hearing loss. These guidelines will facilitate compliance with 29 CFR 1910.95, the OSHA Occupational Noise Exposure Standard, and published clarifications to the Standard.

### **II. SCOPE:**

1. All employees, including part-time (co-op, summer students, etc.), exposed at or above the Action Level of 85 dBA TWA will be included in the Hearing Conservation Program as described below. All employees exposed below the Action Level are included in the Program at the discretion of AbitibiBowater management.
2. All employees included in the Program are expected to fully comply with all of its elements. Non-compliance with any element could lead to disciplinary action in accordance with AbitibiBowater policy.
3. Supervisors and management are responsible and accountable for employee compliance with all elements of the Program.
4. Employees, contractors, visitors and vendors will be required to wear hearing protection gate-to-gate in process areas.

### **III. PROCEDURE: HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

#### **A. Noise Monitoring and Noise Control Program**

1. A noise survey will be conducted every two years. However, if significant changes in production processes, equipment or controls occur between the bi-annual surveys, additional monitoring shall be done to determine if additional employees may be exposed at or above the Action Level, and to determine the adequacy of hearing protection being used by employees.
2. The Action Level is defined as an 8-hour time-weighted average noise exposure level of 85 dBA time-weighted average (TWA) (a noise dose of 50%). The Permissible Exposure Level (PEL) is defined as a noise exposure level of 90 dBA TWA (a noise dose of 100%). A time-weighted average (TWA) is the average of an employee's noise exposure received over an 8-hour period.
3. The instruments used to conduct the monitoring shall be Type 1 or Type 2 instruments capable of providing A-weighted, slow-response measures. Instrument calibration will be checked both before and after measurement.
4. The purpose of noise monitoring is not only to determine sound pressure levels at various locations (dBA SPL), but also to accurately and realistically measure overall employee noise exposure levels, i.e. - Time Weighted Averages (dBA TWA). Obtaining both types of measures will provide the basis for good hearing conservation policy decisions. Area readings with a sound level meter will be used to measure dBA SPL at various locations. In addition, area readings with a sound level meter can reliably be used to estimate dBA TWA when worker mobility is limited, variations in sound pressure levels are minimal,



## Hearing Conservation Program

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and impulse noise is not a significant component of the overall exposure. When these conditions cannot be met, representative employee noise exposure levels (dBA TWA) will be measured using personal noise dosimeters.

5. When noise exposure levels exceed the PEL of 90 dBA TWA, feasible engineering and/or administrative controls will be investigated and then implemented to reduce employee noise exposure levels to or below the PEL when possible.
6. All employees exposed at or above the Action Level of 85 dBA TWA shall be notified of the results of the noise monitoring.

### **B. Audiometric Testing, Follow-Up Program, and OSHA Form 300 Log Recording of Hearing Loss**

1. A baseline audiogram will be obtained prior to employment for all employees. AbitibiBowater will notify the employee of the need to avoid high levels of non-occupational noise during the 14-hour period preceding the baseline hearing test. Exit hearing tests are required for employees who leave employment.
2. All employees exposed at or above the Action Level will receive a hearing test at least annually. All employees exposed below the Action Level will receive a hearing test at the discretion of AbitibiBowater management. Audiometric testing will be provided at no cost to the employee.
3. The person(s) conducting the audiometric testing shall have current certification from the Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC) or be directly responsible to an audiologist or physician.
4. All audiograms will be reviewed by an audiologist or physician. This professional shall determine the need for further evaluation. The affected employee shall be notified in an expedient manner if further evaluation is recommended.
5. Within 21 days of when an employee (who is exposed at or above the Action Level) is determined to have a Standard Threshold Shift (STS), AbitibiBowater will notify the employee of the STS in writing. Unless a physician determines the STS to be not occupationally related, AbitibiBowater Health Services nurse will refit the hearing protection and retrain the employee in its use. The employee will then be required to wear the hearing protection. STS is defined to be a change in an employee's hearing threshold relative to the baseline audiogram of an average of 10 dB or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hertz in either ear.
6. Within 30 calendar days of the date of the STS, AbitibiBowater will retest the employee and consider the results of the retest as the annual audiogram. If the STS does not persist upon the retest, the employee will be notified in writing and the related OSHA Form 300 Log record will be deleted by being lined through (see 7. below).
7. Until such time as a physician states in writing that the STS is not occupationally related, the affected ear will be recorded as an occupational illness on the OSHA Form 300 Log in Column 7(f) as a cumulative trauma disorder. If the affected ear has been recorded on the OSHA Form 300 Log in a prior year against the same baseline and not lined through, then a new record is not required.
8. The reviewing audiologist or physician will determine the need for baseline revision in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.95 and sound professional judgment.



## Hearing Conservation Program

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### C. Audiometer and Sound Booth Requirements

1. An exhaustive calibration of the audiometer will be conducted annually. The calibration procedure will be conducted per ANSI S3.6-1969, until such time as a new standard is adopted by Tennessee OSHA (TOSHA).
2. A functional, biological calibration check of the audiometer will be conducted and documented each day prior to testing.
3. A self-listening check of the audiometer will be conducted and documented each day prior to testing.
4. Background noise levels in the audiometric testing booths will be checked at least every three years. The procedure will at least conform to the requirements of Appendix D of the ANSI Standard, until such time as a new standard is adopted by TOSHA.

### D. Hearing Loss Prevention Training Program

1. All employees exposed at or above the Action Level will be trained annually on hearing loss prevention. All employees exposed below the Action Level will participate in said program at the discretion of AbitibiBowater management.
2. The training program includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Basic requirements of the OSHA Noise Standard and AbitibiBowater policy.
  - b. Effects of noise on hearing and where to find noise monitoring results.
  - c. Purpose of the annual hearing test and audiogram review by an audiologist or physician.
  - d. The purpose of hearing protection equipment, emphasizing the necessity of proper fit, consistent use, and appropriate care and replacement.

### E. Hearing Protection Policy

1. All employees exposed at or above the Action Level will wear only hearing protection approved by AbitibiBowater. Employees exposed below the Action Level will wear approved hearing protectors in all posted areas. Other hearing protectors are not allowed.
2. AbitibiBowater will provide appropriate hearing protection at no cost to the employee, and replace this hearing protection as necessary and appropriate (main gate, stores and departments).
3. AbitibiBowater will ensure that each employee is properly fitted with hearing protection. If more than one hearing protector will properly fit the employee, then the employee is allowed to choose which to use from among those fitting properly. By definition, an “employer-approved hearing protector” is a protector which appropriately fits the physical contours of the employee’s ears, is reasonably comfortable for the employee, can be physically manipulated by the employee, and is appropriate for the employee’s noise exposure level and environmental conditions.
4. AbitibiBowater will provide training in the use and care of the hearing protectors used by the employee.



## Hearing Conservation Program

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5. AbitibiBowater approved hearing protectors shall reduce the employee's noise exposure to no more than 85 dBA TWA. Until such time as a new procedure is adopted by TOSHA, hearing protector attenuation adequacy will be determined by subtracting 7 dB from each hearing protector's published Noise Reduction Rating:  $NRR - 7 \leq 85$  dBA TWA.

### F. Program Recordkeeping Requirements

1. A copy of the most recent noise survey or appropriate summary will be maintained on the company intranet site or reviewed with employees.
2. Audiometric tests will be completed and documented in accordance with the ANSI Standard.
3. Audiometric tests, documentation of annual training, documentation of hearing protector fitting, and other documents pertaining to the employee's participation in the Program will be retained by AbitibiBowater for at least the length of each affected employee's employment plus 30 years.
4. Noise surveys will be retained by AbitibiBowater for at least 30 years.

### IV. RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. The Health and Safety Department is responsible for the overall general administration of the Hearing Conservation Program.
2. The Health and Safety manager is responsible for ensuring noise surveys, personal noise dosimetry, and noise instrument calibrations are performed according to policy.
3. The department Managers, in coordination with the Health and Safety Manager, are responsible for ensuring that employees receive hearing testing.
4. The Health and Safety Manager is responsible for proper recording of each employee STS on the OSHA Form 300 Log.
5. The Health and Safety Department is responsible for ensuring that training is provided to employees.
6. The Health and Safety Manager is responsible for approving appropriate hearing protection equipment.
7. Department managers are responsible to ensure employees with an STS are wearing hearing protection in process areas.



Calhoun Operations

## Hearing Conservation Program

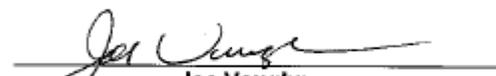
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### Approval Signatures:

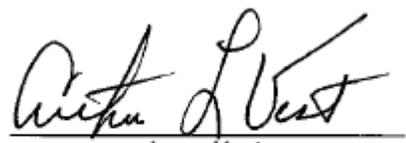
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Reviewed: April 6, 2011

Revised: April 6, 2011



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