

# CTMM POLICY ON HEARING CONSERVATION

## A. POLICY

To provide a safe and healthy workplace for all CTMM employees.

## 1. SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all divisions within the CTMM where work is carried out that may expose an employee to noise at or above the noise-rating limit.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

To prevent noise induced hearing loss and thus optimizing employee performance and well being.

## 3. REFERENCES

- 3.1 Hearing Conservation Regulations promulgated under the Occupational Health & Safety Act, (Act 85 of 1993).
- 3.2 SABS 083: 1996 Measurement and assessment of Occupational Noise.
- 3.3 SABS 1451: Standard Specification for Hearing Protectors, Part 1 – Ear Muffs
- 3.4 SABS 1451: Standard Specification for Hearing Protectors, Part 2 – Ear Plugs
- 3.5 Mine Health and Safety Act, 29 of 1996, Regulation 9.2.

## 4. DOCUMENTATION

- 4.1 Occupational Hygiene Noise Survey Reports.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

**Approved Noise Inspection Authority:** An approved inspection authority for the monitoring of noise in the workplace.

**Assessment:** A programme to determine any risk from exposure to noise associated with the workplace in order to identify the steps that need to be taken to remove, reduce or control such hazard.

**Attenuation of Hearing Protectors:** Hearing protectors with the proven capability of reducing the sound exposure to which the wearer thereof is exposed.

**Audiogram:** A chart, graph or table indicating the hearing threshold levels of an individual as a function of frequency, (namely 0,5, 1,2,3,4,6 and 8 kilohertz), as determined during a measurement of a person's hearing threshold levels by means of a monaural, pure tone, air-conduction threshold test.

**Compensation Commissioner:** The Compensation Commissioner appointed under section 2(1)(u) of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993 (Act No. 130 of 1993).

### **Competent person:**

1. A person registered in terms of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), with the Health Professions Council of South Africa in any of the following three categories:

- i) Orthinolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist).

- ii) Speech therapist and audiologist.
  - iii) Occupational medicine practitioner.
2. A person with a qualification in audiometric techniques obtained from an institution registered with the South African Qualification Authority or any of its structures in terms of the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995), and registered with the South African Society for Occupational Health Nursing (SASOHN).

**Exposed:** Exposed to noise while at a workplace and "exposure" has a corresponding meaning.

**Equivalent Continuous Rating Level:** The equivalent continuous A-weighted sound pressure level during a specified time interval, plus a specified adjustment for impulsiveness of the sound, as contemplated in SABS 083.

**Health & Safety Representative:** A departmental representative elected in terms of section 17 or appointed in terms of section 19 in the Occupational Health & Safety Act, 85 of 1993.

**Hearing Protective Equipment:** Ear-muffs or ear-plugs which are of a type, or conform to a standard, approved by the Minister;

**Instruction No. 171:** The Compensation Commissioner's Circular Instruction No. 171 and Supplement entitled Determination of Permanent Disablement Resulting from Noise Induced Hearing Loss and Trauma.

**Medical Surveillance:** A planned program or periodic examination (which may include clinical examinations, biological monitoring, or medical tests) of employees by an Occupational Medical Practitioner or an Occupational Nursing Practitioner.

**Noise-rating Limit:** The value of the 8-hour rating level, 85 dB (A) at and above which hearing impairment is likely to result.

**Occupational Safety Officer:** A person employed in the Occupational Health & Safety Section of the CTMM, sub-section Occupational Safety.

**SABS 083:** The Code of Practice for the Measurement and Assessment of Occupational Noise for Hearing Conservation Purposes, SABS 083, published by the South African Bureau of Standards.

**%-Hour Rating Level:** The rating level normalized to a nominal 8-hour working day as indicated in SABS 083.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITY

- 6.1 **Prime:** Head of Division (General Manager)
- Secondary:** Head of Occupational Health and Hygiene  
Head of Occupational Safety

The execution of this policy is the responsibility of the Head of the Division which is in line with his obligations to provide and maintain a safe and healthy work environment as per the CTMM Health & Safety Policy.

The head of Occupational Health and Hygiene shall provide an advisory service in line with this policy which may in some instances include the rendering of Occupational Hygiene measurements. Any costs incurred through the appointment of external consultants or analysis fees on samples taken will be for the specific department.

Any delegations made in respect of this policy by the Head of the Division to subordinates must be done in writing.

## **7. EXECUTION**

### **7.1 New Processes**

- a) The CTMM Project Manager / Facility Engineers shall during the design of new installations identify minimum noise exposure requirements and ensure the facility complies therewith.

### **7.2 Existing Installations**

- a) It is the responsibility of the Head of the Division to ensure that no person enter any workplace under his or her control where such person will be exposed to noise at or above the 85 dB(A) noise rating limit.
- b) The head of Occupational Health and Hygiene, shall after the completion of the area task risk assessment co-coordinated by the Head of the Division in collaboration with the Departmental Health & Safety Committee draw up an Occupational Hygiene Survey Schedule which shall contain the frequency for noise surveys for each department / section.
- c) The Occupational Hygiene Surveys must be conducted by an Approved Inspection Authority which will be either appointed by the Department on recommendation of the head of Occupational Health and Hygiene.
- d) Maintenance Engineers to conduct regular maintenance on noisy equipment to prevent noise levels in excess of that required by law.
- e) The Head of the Division shall, after consultation with the Health and Safety Committee establish a training programme for all employees who may be exposed to noise at or above the noise-rating limit:
- f) The Head of the Division shall ensure that the exposure of a person to noise is either prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled:
  - Provided that the control of the exposure shall be regarded as adequate if the exposure is below the noise-rating limit, or if the exposure is at or above the noise-rating limit but the reason has been identified and action is taken as soon as is reasonably practicable, by means other than the use of hearing protective equipment, to lower exposure so that it does not exceed the noise-rating limit.

### **7.3 Control of exposure to noise**

In order to achieve the above the Head of the Division shall, as far as is reasonably practicable, reduce exposure to noise by implementing noise control measures in the following order of priority:

- a) Engineering control measures to eliminate or reduce noise at its source, or the modification of the routes by which noise reaches workplaces.

- b) Administrative control measures to limit the number of persons exposed and the duration of exposure.
- c) The use of hearing protective equipment if engineering and administrative control measures fail to reduce exposure below the noise-rating limit.
- d) The area manager must ensure that any measure provided for the control of exposure to noise is fully and properly used and maintained in an efficient state, in good working order and in good repair and cleanliness.
- e) The requirements of the CTMM Policy on pregnant and breastfeeding employees must be adhered to by the Head of Division for all employees exposed to noise.

#### **7.4 Demarcation**

The Head of the Division shall ensure that:

- a) All noise zones are identified in the workplace under his or her control, where the exposure to noise is at or above the noise-rating limit, that workplace is zoned as a noise zone.
- b) A noise zone is clearly demarcated and identified by a notice indicating that the relevant area is a noise zone and that hearing protective equipment must be worn.
- c) No person enters or remains in a noise zone unless he or she wears the required hearing protective equipment.
- d) The reason why noise exposure is at or above the noise-rating limit is identified and that action is taken, as soon as is reasonably practicable, by means other than the use of hearing protective equipment, to lower the noise level so that it is not at or above the noise-rating limit.

#### **7.5 Hearing Protective Equipment**

Where hearing protective equipment is provided, the Head of the Division shall ensure that:

- a) Employees receive the information, instruction, training and supervision that are necessary with regard to the use of the equipment.
- b) The equipment is kept in good condition and efficient working order.
- c) Where hearing protective equipment (ear plugs in particular) is used on a daily basis, the area manager shall ensure that the replacement frequency does not exceed 3 weeks.
- d) The replacement frequency of ear muffs shall be determined by the guidelines provided by the manufacturer.
- e) Issue no reusable hearing protective equipment to any person, unless the hearing protective equipment is properly decontaminated and, where appropriate, sterilized. Hearing protective equipment should be issued to employees on a personal basis.
- f) Provide separate containers or storage facilities for hearing protective equipment when not in use.

#### **7.6 Training Requirements**

7.6.1 The Head of the Division shall ensure that every employee working in a noise zone is fully conversant with the following aspects:

- a) The content and scope of this policy.
- b) The potential sources of exposure to noise.
- c) The potential risks to health and safety caused by exposure to noise.

- d) The measures taken by the employer to protect an employee against the detrimental effects of exposure to noise.
- e) The precautions to be taken by the employees to protect themselves against the health risks associated with the exposure, including the wearing and use of earplugs and earmuffs.
- f) The necessity, correct use, maintenance and limitations of hearing protectors, facilities and engineering control measures provided.
- g) The assessment of exposure, the purpose of noise monitoring; the necessity for medical surveillance and the long-term benefits and limitations of undergoing such surveillance.
- h) The noise-rating limit for hearing conservation and its meaning.
- i) The procedures for reporting, correcting and replacing defective personal hearing protectors and for engineering noise control measures.

7.6.2 The training shall be conducted prior to the placement of the relevant employee.

7.6.3 Refresher training shall be conducted annually or at intervals that may be recommended by the Departmental Health and Safety Committee.

7.6.4 The Head of the Division shall ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that his or her mandatories or persons other than employees who may be affected by noise exposure at the workplace are given adequate information, instruction and training.

7.6.5 Training must be arranged with the Functional Unit: Occupational Health and Safety Training annually or at intervals recommended by the Health & Safety Committee. Occupational Health shall also keep the records of such training.

## **8. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Employees who are exposed to noise above the noise-rating limit shall obey any lawful order given to him or her by the Head of the Division or employer regarding:

- a) The use of measures adopted for noise control.
- b) The immediate reporting of defective, damaged or lost noise control equipment to the health and safety representative or the employer.
- c) Obeying safety notices and signs.
- d) The use of personal hearing protectors where provided.
- e) A prohibition to enter or remain in an area where personal hearing protectors are required unless the person is authorized to do so and is wearing the required hearing protection.
- f) Co-operation with the employer in his or her task of determining the employee's noise exposure, which may include the wearing of personal sound exposure meters.
- g) The reporting for medical surveillance.
- h) Attending of any Health & Safety related training sessions.

## **9. MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE**

1. An employer shall establish and maintain a system of medical surveillance for all employees exposed to noise at or above the noise-rating limit.
2. An employer shall ensure that the medical surveillance system:
  - a. Consists of a periodic audiogram which is conducted in accordance with SABS 083 and which, during the first three years of employment, is obtained at least annually and thereafter at intervals which may be extended to a maximum period of two years if no referral threshold shift is evident.
  - b. Provide for employees working in, or required to enter, noise zones where the noise exposure equals or exceeds an 8-hour rating level of 105 dBA, to undergo audiometric testing at 6-monthly intervals until it is established that no referral threshold shift is evident and thereafter the interval between tests may be extended to a maximum interval of one year.
  - c. Makes provision for employees who are regularly exposed to gunshots or other explosive events during their working day to undergo audiometric tests at time intervals in accordance with subparagraph (b).
  - d. Consists of an exit audiogram, conducted in accordance with SABS 083, which is obtained for every employee whose employment is terminated or who is permanently transferred to another workplace in respect of which audiometric tests are not required. An audiogram conducted within six months prior to the termination of employment or transfer shall meet his requirement.
3. The results of such surveillance shall be kept on the employee's medical file at Occupational Health.
4. If a hearing loss is identified, Occupational Health will notify the relevant department who must together with Occupational Hygiene investigate the case.
  
5. The Head of Division shall ensure that:
  - a) The names of all employees eligible for medical surveillance (see point 2 above) are identified and their names communicated to Occupational Health, who in turn shall place the identified employees on a medical surveillance program.
  - b) All employees under medical surveillance shall be released from duty to attend their medical surveillance scheduled by Occupational Health.
  - c) All employees attend the scheduled medical surveillance.

## **10. RECORDS**

The Head of the Division shall make the records of all assessments and noise monitoring available for perusal by the relevant Health and Safety Committee and keep all records of assessments and noise monitoring for a minimum period of 40 years.

All original assessment records and noise monitoring reports must be kept by the Head of Division; a copy of which must be sent to the head of Occupational Health and Hygiene.

If a hearing loss is identified by Occupational Health, the relevant department must investigate the incident in accordance with regulation 8 of the General Administrative Regulations together with the Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Officer.

## **11. ANNEXURES**

Nil