

# CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Occupational noise exposure is a significant health hazard in many workplaces. Employees are often exposed to different types and different levels of noises. If you do not know what noise level district employees are being exposed to, there can be hearing damage to the employee and could result in significant costs to your district. In an effort to help protect both the employee and the district, we have listed below some best practices for you to follow.

The first step to knowing if your district has a noise exposure is through noise monitoring. Noise monitoring can assist the district in learning the approximate noise levels of the environment and specific pieces of equipment. As a best practice, any noise levels that are 80 decibels (dBA) or higher will need to have further monitoring. If the noise levels are below 80 dBA, periodic monitoring should be continued as the equipment gets older or if an employee's job duties or the environment changes.

## Some examples of exposures could include:

- Employees using leaf blowers, mowers, or weed eaters for more than 4 hours a day
- Working in blower rooms for extended periods of time
- Using chainsaws for longer than 30 minutes in any single day
- Using a concrete cutter for longer than 3 hours in a day

After initial noise sampling has been completed, and if the district or the Risk Management Consultant feels further testing is needed, SDAO can provide Dosimeter Testing. This device is worn by the affected employee during their work shift. The Dosimeter records noises throughout the day and provides the Time Weighted Average (TWA) for the employee. If the TWA is over 85 dBA, the district should consider engineering controls or administrative controls to reduce the noise to a safe level. The district may also need a hearing conservation program.

*If the district needs a hearing conservation program, please contact the SDIS Risk Management Department for assistance.*

## Best Practices for members that have noise exposures:

- Identify noise levels of equipment suspected of being "loud"
- Look at Engineering & Administrative Controls to reduce noise levels or limit the exposure to employees
- Keep equipment well-maintained
  - Follow manufacturer's recommendations
- Replace old equipment
- Have hearing protection available to employees
  - Ear plugs
  - Ear muffs
- Provide training to staff on a regular basis that addresses
  - Exposures
  - PPE



If you think you might have a noise exposure at your district or would like further information, please do not hesitate to call the Risk Management Department at 800-285-5461 or email [riskmanagement@sdao.com](mailto:riskmanagement@sdao.com).