

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0900.0303.00

Date: 7/20/17

Area: Operations

Page: 1 of 5

Subject: Hearing Conservation

Approved:

Policy 0900.0303.00

1.0 General:

In providing response to emergency incidents, maintaining tools and equipment, and during training, firefighters are often exposed to environments that may produce harmful levels of noise. The firefighters at North Whatcom Fire and Rescue are required to maintain and be proficient at many noise producing tools and equipment like: power saws, rescue equipment, diesel/gasoline engines and high pressure cylinders which, when opened, create excessive high pitched noises. Because of these potentially harmful noise exposures, this policy was constructed to assist the firefighters in methods of protecting their hearing while on the job. It is imperative that the fire district provide proper protection from such exposures. It is equally imperative that fire district personnel comply with the provisions established to protect their personal health.

Recognizing that such conditions may exist, North Whatcom Fire and Rescue hereby establishes a hearing conservation program that is an adopted element of the firefighter safety program.

2.0 Purpose:

It is the purpose of this policy to provide methods of protecting the firefighter's hearing when applicable.

3.0 Scope:

This policy applies to all firefighters who are exposed to, or have the potential for being exposed to, an environment that produces high levels of noise, as defined by Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, the Center for Disease Control and Occupational Safety and Health Administration. All firefighters will be required to wear the supplied hearing protection devices when applicable.

4.0 Policy:

4.0.1 North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, recognizing that firefighter response personnel may be exposed to high levels of noise, will establish a Fire District Hearing Conservation Program to protect the health of all firefighters.

4.0.2 All members of North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, who may be exposed to any high level of noise, will comply with the policies and procedures contained.

Cancels: New

Revised:

Reviewed:

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0900.0303.00

Date: 7/20/17

Area: Operations

Page: 2 of 5

Subject: Hearing Conservation

Approved:

4.1 Definitions:

Audiogram- detailed graph that measures your hearing ability.

(CDC)- The Center for Disease Control is also a federally owned agency, as part of the U.S. Health and Human Services that provides information, training and safety to all individuals.

DB-Decibel- unit used to measure the intensity of a sound.

Duration- the time exposed to dangerous noise levels.

Ear muffs- hearing protection device that covers the entire ear.

Ear plugs- hearing protective devices that fit inside the ear canal.

Exposure- the act of coming in contact with something.

Hazardous noise- Noises that are damaging to a worker's hearing are considered hazardous.

Hearing Conservation training program- A hearing training program is a curriculum that assists the worker on how and when to use hearing protective devices.

Occupational Noise Exposure- any noise that workers are exposed to.

OSHA-Occupational Safety and Health Administration is a federally owned agency that's purpose is to provide training and guidelines to US workers for safety. This department is part of The US Department of Labor.

PPE- *personal protective equipment* referring to hearing protection.

Safe distance- distance away from a high level of noise that requires no hearing protection.

Time weighted average (TWA) - used to calculate a worker's daily exposure to hazardous noise levels.

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) - Laws governing workplace safety developed by The Washington State legislation.

Cancels: New

Revised:

Reviewed:

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0900.0303.00

Date: 7/20/17

Area: Operations

Page: 3 of 5

Subject: Hearing Conservation

Approved:

Washington State Department of Labor and Industries- state owned organization that provides safety guidelines in many areas of job related arenas.

4.2 Policy Statements

4.2.1 The Fire District shall provide proper PPE, when necessary, to protect the health of all firefighters against recognized noise hazards including an excess of the permissible exposure limits or the potential for exposure to dangerous levels of noise. Permissible levels of noise, as defined by OSHA, are eight (8) hours (TWA) at 85dba. The following tools and equipment have been determined to create damaging levels of noise and require hearing protection while in operation:

1. Power saws of all types
2. Diesel and gas engines
3. SCBA filling machines
4. Fire pumps
5. Hydraulic tools-Rescue equipment
6. Striking and prying tools
7. While in the cab of large apparatus during emergency response (protection from engine, horns and sirens)
8. Generators and compressors of any type

4.2.2 The Fire District shall only provide ear muffs or ear plugs that are OSHA approved and that are suitable for the purpose intended.

4.2.3 All members who are required to wear any type of hearing protection shall comply with the policies and operating procedures of the hearing conservation training program. Members shall maintain proficiency in the care and use of all hearing protection devices to be used within the fire district.

4.2.4 The District Fire Chief shall determine whether or not a member may be assigned to a task requiring the use of hearing protection. The fire district approved Physician or other Licensed Health Care Professional (PLHCP) will assist the District Fire Chief in identifying an annual audiogram test in order to establish baseline hearing abilities and determine any occurring loss.

4.2.5 The District Fire Chief shall be responsible for the supervision and administration of the Hearing Conservation Policy. The District Fire Chief shall have the full authority to act on any and all matters relating to the administration and operation of this policy, including, but not limited to:

Revised:

Reviewed:

Cancels: New

Revised:

Reviewed:

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0900.0303.00

Date: 7/20/17

Area: Operations

Page: 4 of 5

Subject: Hearing Conservation

Approved:

- Identifying job descriptions which require the use of hearing protective equipment in the course of performing the duties and responsibilities of the job description.
- Identifying all personnel that are qualified and authorized to wear hearing protective equipment in the course of performing their duties and responsibilities.
- Assuring that members/employees identified in this program comply with all provisions and conditions of the hearing conservation policy and standard operating procedures of provided equipment.
- Assuring that all fire district hearing protection devices in use are thoroughly inspected in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended inspection procedures.
- Assuring that the Hearing Conservation Program is adhered to by all employees/members who wear are exposed to high levels of noise.
- Assuring that the Hearing Conservation Program is reviewed annually in order to evaluate its effectiveness.

4.2.6 The Training Division shall be responsible for training all fire district members who wear hearing protection. The actual training of fire district personnel in the care and use of hearing protection may be delegated to additional/other instructors provided that the individual presenting the instruction is trained and qualified to provide such training, and that written and electronic records of all such training are maintained.

4.2.7 The Training Division shall be responsible for administering the required annual training as stated in WAC 296-817 to all members who wear hearing protection.

4.2.8 The Shift Captains and Shift Lieutenants shall be responsible for the operational readiness and maintenance of all hearing protection devices assigned to their specific shift and/or station.

4.2.14 All Fire District Members, when performing weekly apparatus checks, shall inspect all hearing protection devices assigned to that apparatus.

5.0 Control Mechanisms:

5.1 All fire district members shall maintain proficiency in the care and use of hearing protection devices. Firefighter personnel and their supervisors who fail to adhere to the policies and procedures contained, which have been established for their personal safety, shall be considered in violation of WAC 296-305-01511 and subject to discipline.

Cancels: New

Revised:

Reviewed:

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0900.0303.00

Date: 7/20/17

Area: Operations

Page: 5 of 5

Subject: Hearing Conservation

Approved:

5.2 The District Fire Chief shall be responsible for reviewing the hearing protection policies and procedures whenever necessary, but in no instance shall such review be less than annually.

6.0 References:

- WAC 296-817 Hearing Loss Prevention
- OSHA Hearing Conservation Program
- Washington State Labor and Industries Occupational Hearing Loss

Approved: _____

Commission Chair
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue

Date: _____

Cancels: New

Revised:

Reviewed: