

# Audiology

## SERVICES IN THE WORKPLACE (HEARING CONSERVATION)

Many Americans work in industries or settings where they are regularly exposed to loud noise, potentially putting their hearing at risk.

**Audiologists play a key role in developing and implementing *hearing conservation programs***, which aim to protect workers by preventing hearing loss.



### DID YOU KNOW ?

In the U.S. workplace, about **22 million workers (17%)** are exposed to hazardous noise each year.



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### WHO:

**Occupational hearing conservation audiologists work with adults.** Laws prevent workers under the age of 18 from being employed in hazardous conditions. Community-based hearing conservation programs are designed for people of all ages.

### WHAT:

Audiologists may be responsible for assisting employees in ways that include the following:

- **Identifying and evaluating noise hazards in the workplace.** Audiologists may also provide recommendations for controlling and reducing noise in the work environment.
- **Fitting employees for personal hearing protective devices.** Options include over-the-ear protectors (earmuffs) and/or in-the-ear protectors (earplugs). Audiologists instruct employees on proper usage of hearing protection.
- **Routinely testing the hearing of employees who are exposed to dangerous noise levels.** Even those who already have hearing loss should be tested, as their hearing can get worse with new noise exposure.
- **Educating employees and management about noise-induced hearing loss.** This includes protective measures that an employee can take at work and outside of work (e.g., during leisure activities).
- **Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of workplace regulations to protect employees.** These regulations are provided at the federal, state, and local levels. Industry-specific regulations may also be available.

### WHERE:

Hearing conservation programs are common in the U.S. military and in industries/workplaces where employees are exposed to hazardous noise levels. Examples include the aviation, construction, factory/manufacturing, landscaping/groundskeeping, and mining industries.

### HOW:

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) is the federal agency that requires employers to implement a hearing conservation program when workers are at risk for noise-induced hearing loss. Additional industry-specific agencies also set standards for hearing conservation.

### WHY:

Most work-related hearing loss is permanent. **Such hearing loss is often preventable when employees use hearing protection.** Left untreated, hearing loss can impact a person's health (including higher risk of heart disease and cognitive decline), mental health, job success and earnings, on- and off-the-job safety, and quality of life.