ALGONQUIN COLLEGE | Occupational Health and Safety

HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Effective Date: 2002

Revision Date: November 2026

Version: 4

Document Number: HC-01

Reviewed By: Allisha Wilson

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Document Information

Document Number:	HC-01
Document Title:	Hearing Conservation Program
Document Owner:	Occupational Health & Safety
Approved By:	Mike Benkie
Effective Date:	2002
Most Recent Review Date:	November 2026
Version:	4
Status:	Active
Next Review Due By:	November 2029

Revision History

Version	Date	Description	Completed by:
4	November 2026	Expanded requirements; updated program structure, responsibilities, training, documentation, and related standards.	**Allisha Wilson**
3	January 2018	Reviewed and updated to current legislation	**S. Gagnon**

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this program is to establish requirements for the identification, assessment, and control of workplace noise hazards to prevent occupational noise-induced hearing loss.

This program is intended to protect employees from hazardous noise exposure by ensuring that noise hazards are identified and assessed, appropriate controls are implemented, and hearing protection and hearing conservation measures are provided where required.

This program establishes processes to:

- Identify and assess workplace noise hazards;
- Implement appropriate noise exposure controls;
- Establish requirements for the selection and use of hearing protection;
- Provide employees with information, instruction, and training on noise hazards and hearing conservation; and
- Support hearing health surveillance and the prevention of occupational noise-induced hearing loss.

1.1 Document Authority

This Program is established under the authority of Algonquin College Occupational Health and Safety and forms part of the College's Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS).

This Program supports the College's commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace and learning environment and is developed in accordance with applicable occupational health and safety legislation, regulations, recognized standards, and College policies and procedures.

Where applicable legislation establishes a more stringent requirement than this program, the legislative requirements shall apply.

2.0 Scope

This Program applies to all Algonquin College employees who may be exposed to hazardous noise levels in the course of their work.

The Program establishes requirements for the identification and assessment of workplace noise hazards, implementation of noise exposure controls, selection and use of hearing protection, and hearing conservation measures to prevent occupational noise-induced hearing loss.

3.0 References

3.1 Legislation

- Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1
- Ontario Regulation 381/15 - Noise

3.2 Standards

- CSA Z1007:22 – Hearing Loss Prevention Program (HLPP) Management
- CSA Z107.56-18 – Measurement of Noise Exposure
- CSA Z107.6-16 – Audiometric Testing for Use in HLPP

3.3 Guidance Documents

- Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development – A Guide to the Noise Regulation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) – Noise: Hearing Conservation Program

3.4 Related Algonquin College Documents

This Program should be read in conjunction with other applicable College occupational health and safety programs, procedures, and standards, including but not limited to:

- OHS Program PPE-01 – Personal Protective Equipment
- OHS Standard WP-05 – Personal Protective Equipment: Hearing Protection

4.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions apply:

Attenuation – A reduction in sound pressure level incident upon the ear.

Decibel (dB) – A unit of measurement used to express sound pressure level.

Equivalent Sound Exposure Level ($L_{ex,8}$) – The steady sound level in dBA which, if present in a workplace for eight hours in a day, would contain the same total sound energy as the actual varying sound levels to which a worker is exposed throughout the day.

Hearing Protection Device (HPD) – A device worn or used to reduce the level of noise reaching the worker's ears.

Hazardous Noise Exposure - Exposure to workplace noise that may cause hearing damage or exceed applicable occupational exposure limits.

5.0 Role and Responsibilities

5.1 Senior Leadership

Senior leadership is responsible for:

- Demonstrating leadership and commitment to the Hearing Conservation Program;
- Providing adequate financial, human, and operational resources to support implementation and continual improvement of the program;
- Supporting managers and supervisors in fulfilling their responsibilities under this program; and
- Promoting a workplace culture that prioritizes the prevention of occupational noise-induced hearing loss.

5.2 Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- Identifying work activities and areas where employees may be exposed to hazardous noise levels;
- Contacting OHS when potential hazardous noise exposure is identified or suspected;
- Supporting the implementation of appropriate noise exposure controls;
- Ensuring appropriate hearing protection is available and used where required;
- Ensuring employees receive required information, instruction, and training;
- Communicating changes in work processes, equipment, or conditions that may affect noise exposure; and
- Addressing non-compliance in accordance with College policies and procedures.

5.3 Workers

Workers are responsible for:

- Following established noise control measures and safe work practices;
- Wearing and using hearing protection where required;
- Inspecting, maintaining, and caring for hearing protection devices in accordance with training and manufacturer instructions;
- Reporting suspected hazardous noise exposure or changes in workplace noise conditions to their supervisor;
- Reporting damaged, defective, or unsuitable hearing protection devices;
- Participating in required training and audiometric evaluations where arranged; and
- Reporting concerns regarding their hearing or potential noise exposure to their supervisor.

5.4 Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational Health and Safety is responsible for:

- Developing, maintaining, and periodically reviewing the Hearing Conservation Program;
- Providing technical guidance regarding noise exposure controls and hearing protection;
- Advising departments on appropriate measures to reduce hazardous noise exposure;
- Supporting the implementation of hearing conservation training;
- Coordinating audiometric testing through external an service provider, where requested or considered necessary;
- Coordinating the College's hearing conservation activities, including audiometric surveillance; and
- Monitoring changes to legislation, standards, and recognized best practices and recommending program improvements.

5.5 Joint Health and Safety Committee

The JHSC is responsible for:

- Identifying and bringing forward concerns regarding workplace noise exposure;
- Participating in workplace noise monitoring activities, where applicable;
- Reviewing noise-related concerns brought forward by workers; and
- Making recommendations regarding noise exposure controls and program improvements, where appropriate.

6.0 General Program Requirements

The College shall take all measures reasonably necessary to protect employees from hazardous noise exposure in accordance with applicable legislation and this program.

The College shall ensure that employee noise exposure does not exceed an equivalent sound exposure level of 85 dBA, $L_{ex,8}$, measured over an eight-hour workday, as required by O. Reg. 381/15 – Noise.

Noise hazards shall be identified, assessed, and controlled to prevent occupational noise-induced hearing loss.

6.1 Identification of Noise Hazards

Departments shall identify work activities, equipment, and areas where employees may be exposed to hazardous noise levels.

Potential noise hazards may be identified through:

- Workplace hazard assessments and inspections;
- Changes to equipment, processes, or work activities;

- Employee concerns or reports of excessive noise; and
- Observations of workplace conditions that may indicate hazardous noise exposure.

6.2 Noise Exposure Assessment

Noise exposure assessments shall be conducted where workplace conditions indicate that employees may be exposed to hazardous noise levels.

Assessments shall be coordinated by OHS and conducted using appropriate measurement methods and equipment.

Noise exposure shall be reassessed where changes to equipment, processes, work activities, or control measures may increase employee exposure or affect the effectiveness of existing protective measures.

Noise exposure measurements used to determine appropriate protective measures shall be conducted without taking into account the use of hearing protection devices.

Affected employees, or their representatives, shall be provided with an opportunity to observe noise measurements, where applicable.

6.3 Noise Exposure Controls

The College shall implement appropriate measures to eliminate or reduce hazardous noise exposure, prioritizing engineering and administrative controls over reliance on hearing protection devices.

Where hearing protection is required, it shall be provided and used in accordance with applicable legislation and the requirements of this program.

See Section 7 – Noise Exposure Controls for additional information.

6.4 Employee Communication

Employees affected by noise exposure assessments shall be informed of relevant results and any protective measures required.

Employees shall be provided with information and instruction regarding identified noise hazards, applicable control measures, and hearing protection requirements.

7.0 Noise Exposure Controls

The College shall implement appropriate measures to eliminate or reduce hazardous workplace noise exposure, prioritizing engineering and administrative controls over reliance on hearing protection devices.

Where the measured sound level regularly exceeds 85 dBA, clearly visible warning signage shall be posted at every approach to the affected area, where practicable.

The following sections outline the requirements for noise exposure controls and the use of hearing protection.

7.1 Hierarchy of Controls

Noise exposure shall be controlled in accordance with the hierarchy of controls, prioritizing the elimination or reduction of noise at its source over reliance on PPE.

Control measures shall be considered and implemented in the following order, where reasonably practicable:

- Elimination or substitution of the noise source;
- Engineering controls;
- Administrative controls and safe work practices; and
- Hearing protection devices, where required under applicable legislation.

7.2 Engineering Controls

Engineering controls shall be considered to reduce noise at its source or along the path of transmission. Examples may include:

- Selecting quieter equipment or replacing noisy equipment;
- Installing noise enclosures, barriers, or acoustic materials;
- Installing vibration isolation or sound-dampening materials;
- Maintaining and repairing equipment to prevent excessive noise; and
- Relocating noisy equipment or processes where applicable.

7.3 Administrative Controls and Work Practices

Where engineering controls alone are insufficient, administrative controls and safe work practices shall be considered to reduce employee noise exposure. These may include:

- Limiting the duration of employee exposure to noisy activities;
- Scheduling noisy work to minimize the number of employees exposed;
- Establishing restricted access areas where appropriate; and
- Implementing preventive maintenance practices to reduce equipment noise.

7.4 Hearing Protection as a Control Measure

Where engineering controls are required to protect employees from hazardous noise exposure but are:

- Not in existence or not obtainable;
- Not reasonable or practical to adopt, install, or provide due to the duration or frequency of exposure, or the nature of the work;
- Temporarily ineffective due to a breakdown of the controls; or
- Ineffective during an emergency;

employees shall wear and use appropriate hearing protection devices in accordance with O. Reg. 381/15 – Noise.

Hearing protection shall be selected, provided, and used in accordance with Section 8.0 (Hearing Protection) of this program and OHS Standard WP-05 – Personal Protective Equipment: Hearing Protection.

8.0 Hearing Protection

Where hearing protection devices are required under O. Reg. 381/15 – Noise, the College shall provide appropriate devices to affected employees at no cost.

Hearing protection shall be selected based on assessed workplace noise exposure, the attenuation provided by the device, and the manufacturer's information regarding its use and limitations.

8.1 Selection of Hearing Protection

Hearing protection devices shall be selected based on:

- The sound levels to which the employee is exposed;
- The attenuation provided by the device; and
- The manufacturer’s information regarding the device’s use and limitations.

Selection shall also consider the work environment, compatibility with other required PPE, employee comfort, and the ability to achieve proper fit.

8.2 Use and Maintenance

Employees required to wear hearing protection shall use and maintain the devices in accordance with manufacturer instructions, applicable college standards, and training.

Hearing protection devices shall be inspected and maintained to ensure they remain suitable and effective for their intended use. Damaged, defective, or unsuitable devices shall be replaced.

8.3 Additional Requirements

Additional requirements for the selection, fitting, use, inspection, maintenance, and replacement of hearing protection devices are established in OHS Standard WP-05 Personal Protective Equipment: Hearing Protection

9.0 Audiometric Testing and Hearing Surveillance

Audiometric testing may be arranged where an employee requests testing or where Occupational Health and Safety identifies a need for further assessment based on workplace noise exposure.

9.1 Audiometric Testing Arrangements

Occupational Health and Safety shall coordinate audiometric testing through an external service provider when testing is required or considered necessary.

Employees shall be advised of any preparation requirements provided by the testing service.

9.2 Follow-up

Where an audiometric evaluation indicates a potential change in hearing thresholds, appropriate follow-up shall be coordinated through the external service provider and OHS, as required.

Any recommended workplace control measures or additional assessments shall be addressed in consultation with the affected department.

10.0 Training and Education

Employees who may be exposed to hazardous noise levels shall receive information, instruction, and training on workplace noise hazards and hearing conservation.

10.1 Training Requirements

Employees provided with hearing protection devices shall receive adequate training and instruction in their care and use, in accordance with O. Reg. 381/15 – Noise.

Employees enrolled in the College's Hearing Conservation Program shall receive annual training coordinated by Occupational Health and Safety.

Additional training shall be provided where changes to workplace conditions, equipment, processes, or control measures may affect employee noise exposure.

10.2 Training Content

Training shall include, as applicable:

- The health effects of occupational noise exposure;
- The purpose and importance of hearing conservation;
- Noise exposure control measures;
- The purpose, benefits, limitations, and attenuation of hearing protection devices;
- The selection, fitting, use, care, and maintenance of hearing protection devices; and
- Cleaning and disinfection of reusable hearing protection devices, where applicable.

11.0 Documentation

Documentation supports the implementation, administration, and continual improvement of this program. Records required under this program shall be created, maintained, retained, and disposed of in accordance with applicable legislation, College procedures, and record retention requirements.

11.1 Noise Exposure Records

Records of workplace noise exposure assessments and measurements shall be maintained by Occupational Health and Safety and the applicable department.

Noise exposure measurement records shall be retained for a minimum of two years.

11.2 Audiometric Records

Audiometric records obtained through the Hearing Conservation Program shall be maintained in the employee's Human Resources file.

Records shall be retained for the duration of employment and for 30 years following termination of employment.

11.3 Access and Confidentiality

Employees may request access to their own audiometric records in writing.

Audiometric and medical information shall be handled in accordance with applicable privacy and confidentiality requirements. Access shall be restricted to authorized individuals with a legitimate need for the information.

12.0 Program Review

This program shall be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective, current, and aligned with applicable legislation, recognized standards, College operations, and organizational objectives. Program reviews support the continual improvement of the College's Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

This program shall be reviewed at intervals determined by the College, or more frequently where required by legislative, operational, or organizational changes.

The program shall be reviewed following significant legislative or regulatory changes, changes to applicable standards, significant operational changes, or where incidents, investigations, inspections, audits, or other findings identify the need for revision.

Program reviews shall consider opportunities to improve the effectiveness, clarity, and practical implementation of program requirements.