

# Pinnacol Pointers for Safety Group Programs

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ASSURANCE

*Editor's Note: Safety Group Program Monthly Newsletter Article – Sept. 2018  
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## **Listen Up: The Lowdown on Hearing Conservation Programs**

Is noise at work a problem? You bet. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 22 million Americans are exposed to hazardous noise levels at work, and the Department of Labor says \$242 million is spent each year on workers' compensation for hearing loss disability.

### **Does *your* organization need a program?**

Is excessive noise a problem at your organization? Pinnacol can help answer that question. Our safety consultants are available to test the noise level at your worksite. If the test shows noise equals or exceeds an eight-hour time-weighted average (TWA) of 85 decibels, then your organization needs a hearing conservation program as a first step toward OSHA compliance.

“As a general rule of thumb: If employees three feet from one another must raise their voices or shout to hear one another, the noise level in the work area likely is 85 decibels or higher, and please call us for an evaluation,” urges Pinnacol Industrial Hygienist Joan Brown. “We do these at no cost.”

### **What are the essential components?**

If your organization must develop and implement a hearing conservation program, Pinnacol can help with this, as well. You'll find a [sample program template](#) on our website. The essential components of a program include:

- Noise exposure monitoring for an initial baseline and following workplace changes in production, process, equipment or controls that increase noise exposures
- Audiometric testing for employees exposed to noise equal to or exceeding an eight-hour TWA of 85 decibels (performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist or other physician, or by a technician certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation)
- Hearing protection — provided at no cost to employees exposed to noise equal to or exceeding an eight-hour TWA of 85 decibels

- Employee training on the effects of noise on hearing; the purpose of hearing protectors and the advantages, disadvantages and attenuation (i.e., noise reduction) of various types; instructions on equipment selection, fitting, use and care; and the purpose of audiometric testing and explanation of test procedures
- Recordkeeping of noise exposure measurements, audiometric test records, certificates of training and warnings to workers for noncompliance

Additionally, the hearing conservation program should specify who on staff will coordinate the program and how your organization will administer noise exposure monitoring, audiometric testing, hearing protection, training and recordkeeping. The program also should explain how you'll enforce the use and care of hearing protection.

### **Pinnacol Resources**

You're not alone. Pinnacol safety consultants are here to help with our time and many tools. Visit the [noise and hearing conservation](#) page of our website. There you'll find the following helpful downloads:

- Sample Hearing Conservation Program
- General Estimates of Work-Related Noises
- Preventing Occupational Hearing Loss – A Practical Guide
- Preventing Occupational Hearing Loss – Compliance Checklist
- Preventing Occupational Hearing Loss – Program Evaluation Checklist
- Tips on Using Hearing Protection

You can also contact Pinnacol's Safety On Call at [safetyoncall@pinnacol.com](mailto:safetyoncall@pinnacol.com) or 303.361.4700 or 888.501.4752. Our Safety Services team is committed to helping you protect your employees from occupational hearing loss.

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