



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM (HCP)

Purpose

This Instruction revises and updates the Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch Hearing Conservation Program (HCP) which is designed to prevent employees with significant occupational noise exposures from suffering material hearing impairment.

Policy

It is the policy of the MGC Branch to protect employees against potentially hazardous noise exposure and to comply with [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\) standard 29 CFR 1910.95](#).

Employees who perform in-plant activities must participate in all aspects of the HCP. Employees will protect themselves by wearing hearing protection devices (HPDs) when working or walking through areas of 85 decibels adjusted (dBA) or higher, participating in baseline and annual audiograms, and annual training. It is the MGC Branch's goal to reduce the employee's worksite noise exposure to less than 80 dBA at all times. As a general rule, employees should wear HPDs in all areas of the worksite except for those that are exclusively an office environment.

Background

The MGC Branch first implemented an HCP on August 2, 1984, to assist all employees in reducing noise exposure by providing HPDs. In 1997, the U.S. Public Health Service conducted a baseline noise exposure assessment for MGC Branch activities, and the results revealed noise level exposures in grading chain/cooler areas from 86 dBA to 105 dBA and processing areas between 90 dBA to 103 dBA. For a comparison, these decibel levels fall in the noise range of very busy traffic to a rock drill.

Six Points of the HCP

The MGC Branch's HCP consists of six key areas of activity. They are:

1. Noise Exposure Monitoring. MGC Branch supervisors will collect data on all plants where services are provided.
 - a. MGC supervisors and assigned graders will ask plants to share noise exposure monitoring data to compliment the MGC Branch's HCP.

- b. Where monitoring is necessary, Federal Occupational Health (FOH) Services safety representatives will conduct all testing and record keeping for the MGC Branch.
 - c. All plants that receive full-time service will be sampled at least annually through plant data or FOH monitoring.
 - d. Repeat monitoring shall occur whenever there are changes in plant production, processes, or controls which increase noise exposure.
 - e. Sampling data will include specific areas of plants where MGC Branch services are provided.
 - f. Based on monitoring data, designated wear areas of plants for HPDs will be established.
2. Audiometric Evaluation. Audiometric examinations for all graders and supervisors will consist of two types of testing groups:
- a. FOH Group - all supervisors and graders within a reasonable distance of an FOH Center.
 - b. Private Provider Group - all remaining supervisors and graders.

The Customer Service Director Shall Ensure:

- a. That in most cases, the audiometric testing will be accomplished in the March-July timeframe. All examinations (including travel time) will be conducted within the course of an employee's basic workweek. Costs for audiometric testing, referrals, and mileage will be paid by the MGC Branch in accordance with applicable regulations or instructions.
- b. Communication is maintained with FOH centers and Private Provider contractors to minimize conflicts in scheduling appointments.
- c. Notification is supplied to FOH and Private Provider contractors of scheduled testing appointments.
- d. All new employees receive an audiometric evaluation within the first 2 weeks of employment.
- e. All supervisors and graders in their area of responsibility are tested annually.

Supervisors and Graders Shall:

- a. Supervisors will schedule appointments with the appropriate FOH Center or Private Provider location as designated by the Customer Service Director.

- b. Supervisors will notify the Customer Service Director and graders of scheduled appointment time, date, and testing location by e-mail.
- c. Report to the testing site at the designated time assigned by the supervisor, and cooperate with testing personnel while the audiometric test is conducted.
- d. Complete sections A-D of the Audiogram History/Report (FOH-17) form (Exhibit A), and provide this form to FOH personnel at the time of testing.
- e. At the time of testing supply the FOH-17 (Exhibit A), USDA Commodity Graders Baseline, and the Authorization for Disclosure of Information Forms to the testing provider assigned by the supervisor.
- f. Immediately notify their supervisor if they are unable to complete the audiometric examination so the appointment can be canceled and rescheduled.
- g. Fourteen hours prior to testing, avoid all sources of noise (loud music, power tools, firearms, motorcycles, heavy machinery, etc.) that exceed normal conversational levels.

FOH Shall:

- a. Provide a copy of the audiogram results to the employee, if requested.
 - b. Notify the MGC Branch Office of any supervisor or grader with an abnormal baseline audiometric evaluation so they may be referred to a specialist for further evaluation.
 - c. Notify the MGC Branch office of any supervisor or grader showing a threshold shift (STS) so that a re-test can be scheduled.
 - d. Maintain confidential records of employee audiometric evaluations.
3. Hearing Protection Devices (HPDs). The MGC Branch currently provides two types of HPDs through the MGC Branch Office. Employees have the option to select either one or both of the following:
- a. Ear Muff - provides extra protection against low frequency noise and great protection against high frequency noise. Cushions on the muffs should be regularly inspected for cracks and replaced when necessary. "Cool Pads" are disposable covers which soak up perspiration and makes muff more comfortable.
 - b. Ear plugs - available in two sizes: Medium/Large with/without cord and Small with/without cord. These can be washed daily in mild soap and warm water or sterilized with boiling water or alcohol.

After completion of the initial training, employees will be responsible for proper fit, use, care, daily inspection, and ordering of hearing protectors and replacement parts. Alternative types of hearing protectors are acceptable if for medical or physical reasons an employee cannot wear HPDs provided by the MGC Branch. Requests for alternative protectors for medical or physical reasons must be submitted in writing along with a physician's statement to the MGC Branch Office. The physician's statement must include a description, manufacturer's data, price of the alternative type of hearing protection, and a justification for the alternative device.

NOTE: Employees must wear HPDs in designated wear areas of a plant. Supervisors during the course of their routine supervisory duties will ensure employees are properly wearing hearing protectors. Any evidence of noncompliance will be documented, and repeated failure to comply with the requirements of this Instruction will result in progressive disciplinary action. Progressive disciplinary actions are:

- a. Oral Warning documented on an Employee Progress Review Report (MGC-18) form (Exhibit B).
 - b. Written warning.
 - c. Letter of reprimand.
 - d. Disciplinary action (time off less than 14 days).
 - e. Adverse action (more than 14 days).
 - f. Removal.
4. Annual Training. Annual training will be provided to all graders and field supervisors. Training shall include:
- a. Basic information on the MGC Branch's HCP and effects of noise on hearing.
 - b. Advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation (decrease in effectiveness) of various types of HPD.
 - c. How and when to wear HPDs. How to care for HPDs.
 - d. Supervisor's role and responsibilities (including actions taken for not wearing HPDs).
 - e. Identification of the designated wear areas of an employee's worksite.
5. Recordkeeping. Records will be kept for each phase of the HCP.
- a. Noise exposure measurement records will be kept for 2 years by FOH.

- b. Audiometric test records will be kept by FOH for the duration of an individual's employment.
 - c. Training records will be kept in the MGC Branch Office.
6. HCP Evaluation. All elements of the MGC Branch HCP will be evaluated to determine the program's effectiveness in preventing hearing loss. Comparisons will be made on:
- a. Noise surveys
 - b. Employee audiograms.
 - c. Use of HPDs.
 - d. Attenuation provided by HPDs.
 - e. Participation in training.

Additional Education and Training Material Available

The MGC Branch also has brochures and video tapes available upon request through the MGC Branch Office.

1. Hearing Conservation. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 3074, dated 1995 (Revised). Summary of the required components of OSHA's HCP.
2. Save your Hearing Cells! Issued to all employees in 1994. New employees should request and read this pamphlet.
3. In Defense Of Hearing. A pamphlet issued to all area offices to better educate all supervisors in the importance of hearing safety.
4. S. O. S. Hearing and National Hearing Test. Video which can be loaned to employees to view on request.

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Exhibit A



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Program Support Center

Federal Occupational Health Service
90 Seventh Street, Suite 4-310
San Francisco, CA 94103

March 3, 2010

USDA COMMODITY GRADERS BASELINE AUDIOGRAM

Use this as the USDA Employee's Baseline test for determination of any Standard Threshold Shift

Name of Employee:

Address on File:

USDA Employee must complete:

Is this your current address? Yes No
If NO, please write down your CURRENT address:

Date of Baseline:

Left ear Baseline Date (if available):

L 500	L 1000	L 2000	L 3000	L 4000	L 6000	L 8000

Right ear Baseline Date (if available):

R 500	R 1000	R 2000	R 3000	R 4000	R 6000	R 8000

U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE / FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Audiogram History / Report

Tape Tracing Here

Baseline Annual Retest

A. Identification:

_____ (cross out and provide correct SS# if needed)

Last name _____ First name _____ MI _____ Social Security # _____

Date of birth _____ Sex M F Length of time on job _____ months _____ yrs.

(cross out and correct if necessary) circle one

Job title _____ Job location _____

B. Noise Exposure:(check all that apply) Steady Intermittent Impulse

Source of Noise _____ Estimated hours per day exposed _____

Time since most recent noise exposure: Hours _____ Days _____
Duration of most recent noise exposure: Hours _____ Days _____

Other Noise Exposure: (check all that apply)

Prior military service Loud music
 Firearms Motor cycles
 Power tools Heavy machinery

C. Protective Equipment Used: Ear plugs Ear muffs Canal Caps Other

How often do you wear this equipment: Always Sometimes Rarely Never
Type _____

D. Medical History: (check all that apply)

History of hearing loss History of ringing in ears
 Family history of hearing loss History of recurrent impacted ear wax
 History of recurrent ear infections History of wearing hearing aid R L
 History of head injury Current cold, flu or allergy symptoms

Comments: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY PHYSICIAN OR NURSE/TECHNICIAN

E. Physical examination of ear: Left _____
Right _____

F. Education: (the following was discussed with the employee)
Causes of hearing loss Types of ear protectors
How to protect hearing Importance of hearing program

G. Assessment: (check one)
Normal audiogram
Abnormal audiogram with no change from baseline (R/L)
Standard threshold shift or other significant change (R/L)

H. Recommendations: (check all that apply)
Continue annual testing Repeat manual audiogram Refer to Audiologist/ENT

Nurse/ Technician _____ (print name) _____ (signature) _____ (title) _____ (date)

Physician _____ (print name) _____ (signature) _____ (date)

Remarks: _____ **Health Center Stamp Here**

AUDIOMETER CALIBRATION (Re:29CFR 1910.95, Occupational Noise Standard)
 Daily Biological /Functional Check [1910.95(h)(5)(i)]: Completed Yes No
 Calibration Dates: Acoustic: [1910.95(h)(5)(ii)] _____
 Exhaustive: [1910.95(h)(5)(iii)] _____

US PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE Federal Occupational Health

AUTHORIZATION FOR DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

(Pursuant To The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, 29 CFR 1910.1020, and 42 CFR Part 2)

(The release of information about a patient who is treated or referred for treatment for alcohol or drug abuse, or the medical results of such abuse, is governed by the Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Record Regulations, 42 CFR Part 2).

TO: **Federal Occupational Health** **Other**

Federal Occupational Health/U.S. Public Health Service
(name)

(address) _____ (use health center stamp)

You are hereby authorized to furnish information **from** the record of the individual named below which is in the record system of your facility, and release it **to:** (print or type - name, title and address)

Mr. Willard Goad
USDA, AMS, LSP, Meat Grading Branch
13952 Denver West Parkway
Bldg 53, Suite 350
Lakewood, CO 80401

1. Name of client or subject individual (print or type)	
2. Agency USDA/ Marketing Service/ Meat Grading Branch	
3. Purpose or need for the disclosure (please check) <input type="checkbox"/> COMPENSATION CLAIM(S) <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER <input type="checkbox"/> ATTORNEY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify)	4. Specify extent and nature of information to be disclosed for each purpose or need indicated, and SPECIFY inclusive dates: from _____ to _____ Audiogram Testing Results are to be released to Agency designee.

This authorization is subject to revocation at any time except to the extent that DFOH or the other program specified which is to make the disclosure has already taken action in reliance on it. If this authorization has not been revoked otherwise, or has not expired in accordance with the terms of the duration statement provided above, it will expire upon the termination of the interagency agreement that authorized the services provided by Federal Occupational Health for the subject individual's federal employer.

Any person who knowingly and willfully requests or obtains any record concerning an individual from a Federal agency under false pretenses shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than \$ 5,000 (5 U.S.C 552a(i)(3)), in the case of alcohol and drug abuse patient records, a falsified authorization for disclosure is prohibited under 42 CFR 2.31 and is punishable by a fine of not more than \$500 for a first offense or a fine of not more than \$5,000 for a subsequent offense, in accordance with 42 CFR 2.4.

5. Print Name of Client/Subject Individual:	6. If other than subject, indicate relationship or authority	7. Date of signature
8. Signature of Client/Subject Individual*	9. Signature of Parent or Guardian, if minor*	

Exhibit B

USDA-AMS

EMPLOYEE PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT

EMPLOYEE

SUPERVISOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

MONTH/YEAR

SECTION A - REVIEW RECORD

DATE	LOCATION	TYPE OF WORK	CORRELATION

SECTION B - ELEMENTS REVIEWED

CRITICAL

I. GRADING KNOWLEDGE/COMMUNICATIONS

CARCASS ELIGIBILITY

KNOWLEDGE OF STANDARDS/INSTRUCTIONS

QUALITY GRADE

YIELD GRADE

COMMUNICATIONS/TRADE RELATIONS

II. CERTIFICATION/KNOWLEDGE/COMMUNICATIONS

PLANT RECORDS/CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENTS

KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIFICATIONS/INSTRUCTIONS

SAMPLING PROCEDURES

COMMUNICATIONS/TRADE RELATIONS

III. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/CIVIL RIGHTS

AWARENESS/DEMONSTRATION OF POLICIES/RESPONSIBILITIES

NON-CRITICAL

IV. APPLICATION OF OFFICIAL MARKS

STAMPING/ROLLER BRANDING

V. ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

PREPARATION/ACCURACY/LEGIBILITY

TIMELINESS

VI. TRAINING/MENTORING

TECHNICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE

PERSONAL ASSISTANCE/GUIDANCE

SECTION C - MONTHLY SUMMARY OF ELEMENTS REVIEWED

Element I	Element II	Element III
Element IV	Element V	Element VI

EMPLOYEE PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT -- PAGE 2

EMPLOYEE

SUPERVISOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

MONTH/YEAR

SECTION D - REMARKS (Applicable Comments)

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE

DATE
