

**INTERNAL ONLY**  
**ISLHD PROCEDURE**  
**COVER SHEET**



**Health**  
Illawarra Shoalhaven  
Local Health District

<b>NAME OF DOCUMENT</b>	Noise Management
<b>TYPE OF DOCUMENT</b>	Procedure
<b>DOCUMENT NUMBER</b>	ISLHD CORP PROC 46
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<b>FORMER REFERENCE(S)</b>	OHS Noise Management PD 305
<b>EXECUTIVE SPONSOR or EXECUTIVE CLINICAL SPONSOR</b>	Executive Director Finance, Workforce, Corporate and Strategic Improvement
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Safety Coordinator People, Safety and Culture
<b>KEY TERMS</b>	WHS, Work Health & Safety, Risk Management, Noise Management, Health Surveillance.
<b>FUNCTIONAL GROUP OR HUB</b>	District Wide
<b>NSQHS STANDARD</b>	Standard 1
<b>SUMMARY</b>	Procedure for identifying and managing noise within ISLHD facilities. Provides guidance on risk management strategies for noise levels on or above LAeq,8h of 85dB (A).

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY**

Feedback about this document can be sent to [ISLHD-CorporateGovernance@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ISLHD-CorporateGovernance@health.nsw.gov.au)

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) has an obligation under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011 to, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult with workers who carry out work for ISLHD and who are, or are likely to be, directly affected by exposure to hazardous noise.

ISLHD will consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with other duty holders, such as contractors and subcontractors, to eliminate or minimise risks associated with hazardous noise, so far as is reasonably practicable.

This procedure has been developed to help manage and reduce the exposure to workers of high levels of noise while at work, as well as outlining the safety precautions that are to be implemented, and the management of workers that may be potentially exposed to high levels of noise.

### BACKGROUND

Specialised equipment is used to measure sound levels in decibels and include weighting settings of 'A' and 'C' for measurement. The Decibel (dB) is the unit for measuring sound pressure levels. Sound level measurements may also be 'weighted' to place emphasis on frequencies that cause damage under different circumstances.

Excessive noise exposure in the workplace occurs when:

- The total amount of noise energy a worker is exposed to in the course of their working day exceeds the equivalent of 85dB(A), averaged over an 8-hour period. If a worker's average exposure to noise exceeds this limit, it is more likely to cause gradual hearing loss over a period of time.
- A peak sound pressure level of 140dB(C) occurs at any time in the course of their working day. A peak sound of this level is more likely to cause immediate hearing loss.

Workers that may be exposed to high levels of noise who work shifts of 10 hours or longer, or work more than five days per week, may have increased risk to noise-induced hearing loss, and an adjustment factor is required for their measurements. Workers need to be made aware that exposure to noisy activities outside their work hours will also impact on their overall noise exposure in a 24-hour period.

The exposure standards for noise protect most, but not all, people. Therefore, workplace noise should be kept lower than the exposure standard for noise where reasonably practicable.

Below are some identified areas, equipment and circumstances within ISLHD that may require monitoring of noise levels and/or assessment of workers to occur:

- Maintenance areas and workshops.
- Sterilising Services.
- Plant rooms.

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- Gardening.
- Helicopter retrievals areas.
- Dental Clinics.
- Plaster saws.
- Following the introduction of new plant or equipment or the modification of existing plant or equipment likely to affect a worker's exposure to noise.
- Where it has been indicated by conducting a noise assessment ([ISLHD CORP F 449](#)).

Exposure to a number of common industrial chemicals and some medications can also cause hearing loss or exacerbate the effects of noise on hearing. These substances are called ototoxic substances. Ototoxic substances absorbed into the bloodstream may damage the cochlea in the inner ear and/or the auditory pathways to the brain, leading to hearing loss and tinnitus. Hearing loss is more likely to occur if there is exposure to a combination of ototoxic substances or a combination of ototoxic substance exposure and noise exposure.

There is also some evidence that exposure to hand transmitted vibrations can exacerbate the effects of noise on hearing.

Further details of common ototoxic substances and sources of vibration are found in *SafeWork NSW Code of Practice: Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work*.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

**Decibel (dB)** is the unit for measuring sound levels

**Exposure standard for noise** is defined in the WHS Regulations as an LAeq,8h of 85 dB(A) or an LC peak of 140dB(C). There are two parts to the exposure standard for noise because noise can either cause gradual hearing loss over a period of time or be so loud that it causes immediate hearing loss.

**LAeq,8h** means the eight hour equivalent continuous A-weighted sound pressure level in decibels, referenced to 20 micro pascals, determined in accordance with AS/NZS 1269.1. This is related to the total amount of noise energy a person is exposed to in the course of their working day. It takes account of both the noise level and the length of time the person is exposed to it. An unacceptable risk of hearing loss occurs at LAeq,8h values above 85dB(A).

**Hazardous noise** in relation to hearing loss means noise that exceeds the exposure standard for noise in the workplace.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 3.1 Employees must:

- Use the appropriate hearing protection equipment for each designated task or area.
- Undergo the required audiometric testing if working in a position that is identified as high risk for noise-induced hearing loss.

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- Advise their Line Manager if they experience any hearing loss that they feel may be due to noise exposure in the workplace.

**3.2 Line Managers must:**

- Ensure hearing protection is provided for workers where it is not reasonably practicable to implement engineering sound control measures, or where sound control measures implemented do not reduce the worker's noise exposure.
- Ensure workers are consulted at each step of the risk management process which encourages everyone to work together to identify hazardous noise risk factors and implement effective control measures.
- Ensure noise levels of all work areas and equipment are measured and noise levels identified as on or above LAeq,8h of 85dB(A) are posted with appropriate signage.
- Ensure all reasonably practicable steps are taken to reduce noise levels in the workplace and to isolate workers from exposure to loud noise.
- Ensure that arrangements are made for noise-exposed workers to have the required audiometric testing.
- Ensure appropriate training is provided to noise-exposed workers on the harmful effects of exposure to loud noise.

**3.3 General Managers/ Service Directors must:**

- Ensure that arrangements are made for noise-exposed workers to have the required audiometric testing.
- Ensure a process is in place to implement the Noise Management procedure.
- Ensure noise monitoring records are retained.

**3.4 Chief Executive must:**

- Apply due diligence by monitoring the implementation of the ISLHD Noise Management procedure and ensure hazardous noise risks are identified, assessed by a competent person and controlled by implementing the most effective control measures reasonably practicable in the circumstances, and reviewing control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

**4. PROCEDURE**

**4.1 Identifying a Noise Hazard**

- Once a noise hazard has been reported or identified, the Manager and worker should use the [ISLHD CORP F 449 Noise Hazard Identification Checklist form](#) to help identify if any noise processes and tasks exist that require further assessment and control.
- Immediate action should be taken to control the noise where this is possible.
- Action to control noise should be guided by inspection of the workplace and reviewing information supplied by manufacturers or suppliers of equipment being used.

#### **4.2 Noise Assessment**

- A noise assessment should be done by a competent person in accordance with the procedures in *AS 1269.1 Measurement and assessment of noise emission and exposure*. ([ISLHD Access to Australian Standards](#))
- A competent person is one who possesses accurately calibrated noise measuring instruments and has an understanding of the WHS Regulation 2017 for noise requirements. This person must know how to check the performance of instruments, how to take measurements properly and can interpret the results of the noise measurements.
- A noise assessment report should be used to select appropriate control measures. The relevant findings from the assessment and report should be included in training for all workers.

#### **4.3 Controls**

- A requirement of the WHS Regulation 2017 is to work through a hierarchy of controls to choose the control measure that firstly eliminates the identified risk, or if this is not possible, minimises the level of risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.
- Examples of ways to reduce risk of injury within the hierarchy of control are:

##### **Eliminate the Risk:**

- The most effective control measure is to eliminate the source of noise completely, for example by ceasing to use a noisy machine, changing the way work is carried out so hazardous noise is not produced or by not introducing the hazard into the workplace.

##### **Substitute equipment or processes to reduce noise:**

- Equipment purchased or hired should be from suppliers who can demonstrate a lower noise design.
- Equipment and working environments may be able to be modified to reduce the sound pressure levels experienced.
- Fitting sound absorbing materials to hard surfaces within a room, fitting exhaust silencers to compressors and lowering operating speeds of equipment are examples of engineering controls to reduce noise.

##### **Isolate the source of the noise:**

- If the worker is able to move away from the noise source, or vice versa, the sound pressure level will drop significantly and may reduce the risk of injury due to noise.
- In open space, sound levels reduce by about 6dB for the first metre away from the source and then by every additional 2 metres distance separating the worker from the source.
- Isolation may also be achieved by using barriers to reduce the sound level experienced by the worker.

**Use administrative controls:**

- Administrative noise control measures reduce the amount of noise to which a person is exposed to by reducing the time they are exposed to it.  
Examples include:
  - Organising schedules so that noisy work is done when only a few workers are present.
  - Sending Disruption Notices notifying workers and others in advance of noisy work so they can limit their exposure.
  - Keeping workers out of noisy areas if their work does not require them to be there.
  - Sign-posting noisy areas and restricting access.

**Use personal hearing protectors:**

- Personal hearing protectors, such as ear-muffs or ear-plugs, should be used in the following circumstances:
  - When the risks arising from exposure to noise cannot be eliminated or minimised by other more effective control measures.
  - As an interim measure until other control measures are implemented.
  - Where extra protection is needed above what has been achieved using other noise control measures.
- If the use of personal hearing protectors is necessary, it is important that the hearing protectors are worn throughout the period of exposure to noise. The rating of the ear protection should be checked to ensure it is appropriate to the assessed noise level.
- Areas where people may be exposed to hazardous noise should be sign-posted as hearing protector areas and the boundaries of these areas should be clearly defined.
- Where sign-posting is not practicable, you should make other arrangements to ensure that workers and others know when personal hearing protectors are required.

**4.4 Audiometric Testing.**

- Managers are to identify workers that require audiometric testing if the worker is required to frequently use personal hearing protectors as a control measure for noise that exceeds the exposure standard, in conjunction with having completed the ISLHD Noise Hazard Identification Checklist (ISLHD CORP F 449).
- Hearing is also to be monitored with audiometric testing in situations where any of the following occur:
  - Exposure to ototoxic substances occurs where airborne exposure is greater than 50% of the national exposure standard for the substance, regardless of noise level.
  - Exposure to ototoxic substances occurs at any level, and noise exceeds the equivalent of 80 dB(A) averaged over an 8-hour period or peak noise greater than 135 dB(C) occurs at any time.

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- Hand-arm vibration at any level and noise exceeds the equivalent of 80 dB(A)LAeq or peak noise greater than 135 dB(C) occurs at any time.
- Audiometric testing must be provided within three months of the worker commencing work, and at least every two years during employment (see Appendix 1 – Audiometric Testing Flow Chart for ISLHD process). More frequent testing may be needed if the 8-hour equivalent exposures exceed 100 dB(A)LAeq,8h.
- Managers are to advise Workforce Support Team that a worker requires audiometric testing.
- Workers will receive a letter from their Workforce Support Team outlining the arrangements to have the audiometric testing, including their ISLHD identifying code (Refer to Appendix 2 – Audiometric Letter)
- ISLHD identifying code will be sourced through Injury Connect – this will ensure that audiometric reports remain confidential and provide a 2 yearly reminder.
- Workers and Workforce Support will receive a copy of the results of the audiometric testing.
- Only with the consent of the worker should results be provided to other parties. Unidentifiable individual results and group data should be made available to Health and Safety Representatives of the worker's work group.
- Should the reports identify any abnormal hearing loss (while employed with ISLHD) workers are required to notify their manager and complete an IIMS as per WHS Incident Reporting and Investigation (ISLHD OPS PROC 81).

### 4.5 Information, Training and Instruction

- Information, training and instruction must be provided to workers and others who may be exposed to hazardous noise or other agents that may contribute to hearing loss.
- The training program should include, but is not limited to:
  - The tasks the workplace has with a potential to give rise to noise exposure.
  - How to select, fit, wear, maintain and store personal hearing protectors.
  - The purpose and nature of audiometric testing.
  - How to report defects in hearing protectors and noise control equipment.

### 4.6 Other effects of noise

- Adverse health effects can occur at noise levels below the exposure standard, when noise chronically interferes with concentration and communication.
- The risk can be minimised by keeping the noise levels below 50 dB(A) where work is being carried out that requires high concentration or effortless conversation, or below 70 dB(A) where more routine work is being carried out that requires speed or attentiveness or where it is important to carry on conversations.
- To work safely, workers must also be able to hear warning signals above any other ambient noise at the workplace.

### 4.7 Review

- Noise control measures must be reviewed:

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- When the control measure does not control the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Before a proposed change to the workplace.
- If a new hazard or risk is identified.
- If consultation indicates it is necessary.
- If a Health and Safety Representative requests a review.



**5. DOCUMENTATION**

- [ISLHD CORP F449 - Noise Hazard Identification Checklist](#)
- [ISLHD CORP F 450 – Noise Hazard Letter to Employee](#)

**6. AUDIT**

Compliance with this procedure will be audited through Ministry of Health WHS Audit at least every two years.

**7. REFERENCES**

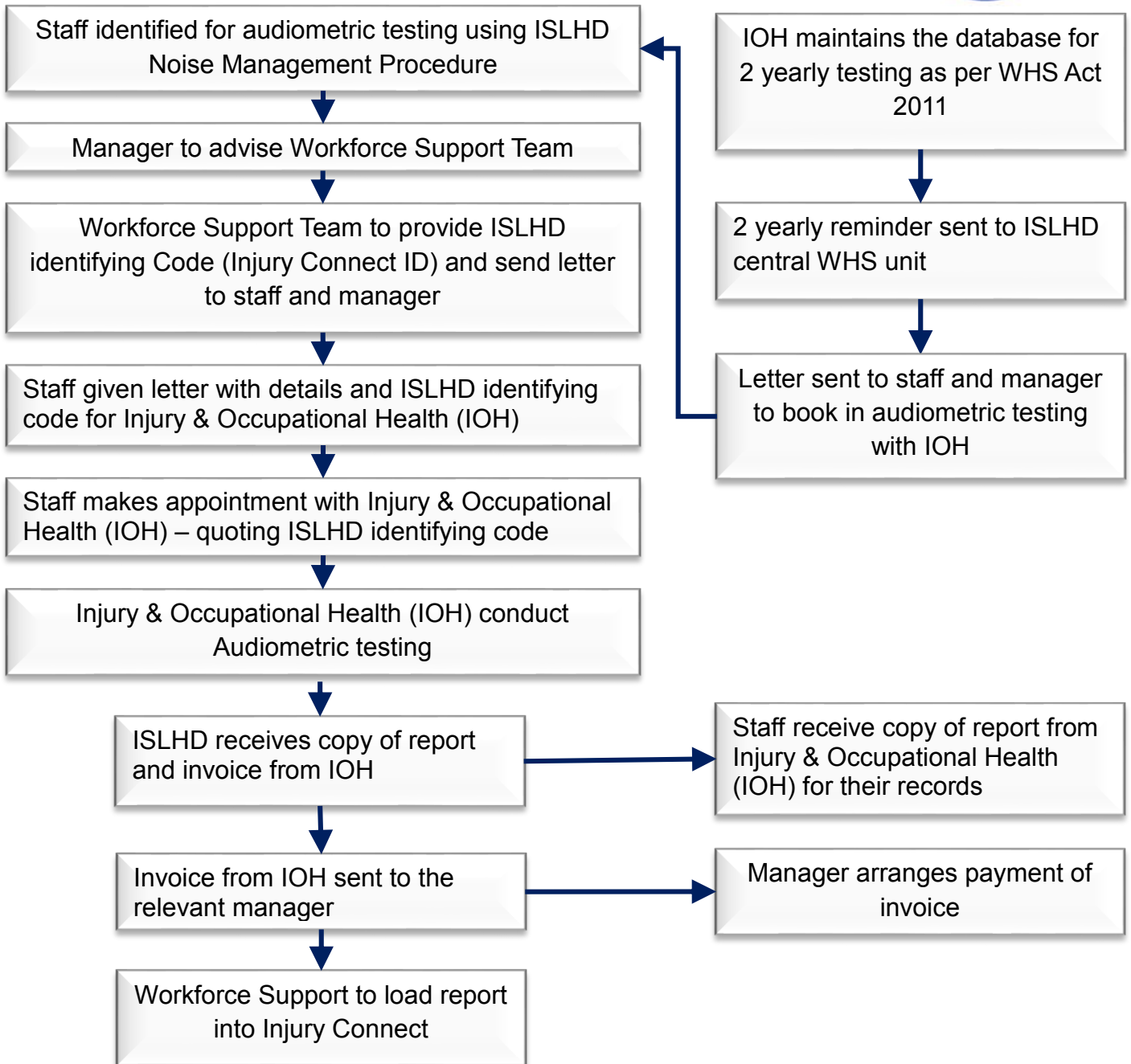
- [NSW Health Policy Directive Work Health and Safety: Better Practice Procedures PD2013\\_050](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 No 10](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#)
- [Code of Practice – How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks](#) (Dec 2011)
- [Code of Practice - Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work](#) (Sep 2015)

**8. REVISION & APPROVAL HISTORY**

Date	Revision No.	Author and Approval
July 2013	0	Manager, Work Safety and Injury Management Service Approved for publication by Manager Corporate and Executive Support Services
August 2015	1	Safety and Well-being Manager SMS review and development.
January 2018	2	Safety Coordinator ISLHD Safety Management System Review
August 2018	2	Approved by Executive Director Finance, Workforce and Corporate Strategic Improvement

8. APPENDIX 1 -

# Audiometric Testing Flow Chart



**9. APPENDIX 2 –ISLHD CORP F 450 – Noise Hazard – Letter to Employee**

[Insert date]

[Insert Employee Name]

[Insert Work Location]

Dear [insert name]

Your position within Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) has been identified as a role where you may be exposed to excessive noise levels, and that your position requires the use of hearing protection when doing specific tasks.

As part of our requirements under work health and safety legislation, we need to conduct audiometric testing (for workers that may be exposed to hazardous noise) within 3 months of you commencing in such a position, and then every 2 years after that.

ISLHD has arranged with IOH (Injury and Occupational Health) to conduct the audiometric testing for our employees as part of this process. Please note that there is no charge to you for this assessment, and all invoicing will be sent to ISLHD for payment. You will be responsible for making the booking for the hearing assessment directly with IOH at the below centres. When making the booking, please consult with your manager for a suitable time for attendance and ensure that you quote your ISLHD reference number [Insert Ref No]:

**South Coast:**

68 Osborne Street,  
Nowra NSW 2541

**02 4422 5100**

Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm

**Wollongong:**

32 Swan Street,  
Wollongong NSW 2500

**02 4210 7200**

Monday to Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm

Please ensure that you attend your appointment or notify IOH at least 24hrs prior to appointment if you are unable to attend.

***A non-attendance/late cancellation fee of 50% of the service fee may be chargeable for non-attendance or cancellations less than 1 business day prior to the booked date of service.***

You will receive a copy of the hearing assessment report from IOH, and a copy will be sent through to the Workforce Support Team for your work area. IOH will notify ISLHD when your 2 yearly audiometric testing is due, and you will be advised accordingly.

Should you have any concerns or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact your Workforce Support Team.

[Insert Name]

[Insert Position]