

E-PME  *Enlisted*
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Hearing and Respiratory Protection 4.G.01

Learning Objective(s): COMPLETE all unit-required hearing and respiratory protection training.

Why You Need to Know This

In the course of performing your duties you may be required to work or live in settings and/or under environmental conditions which could be potentially-hazardous to your health and well-being. For example, Coast Guard working and living environments contain many high intensity noise sources. Exposure to high intensity noise can cause damage to hearing, resulting in debilitating health concerns for Coast Guard members. Likewise, exposures to harmful dusts, fogs, fumes, mists, gases, smokes, sprays, or vapors can also result in short-term and/or long-term health problems. To abate these hazards, the Coast Guard has established policies that mandate the use of safety devices to lessen the risk of hearing- and/or respiratory-related injuries.

This lesson will provide you with the information you will need to know in regards to the proper use of hearing and respiratory protection devices.

Topics Covered

This section will cover the following topics:

- Hearing Conservation Program Overview
- Hazardous Noise Levels Defined
- Hearing Protection Requirements
- Hearing Conservation Training Requirements
- Respiratory Protection Program Overview
- Role of Respiratory Protection Program Coordinator (RPC)
- Member's Responsibility
- Policy Violations

At the end of this lesson you will be required to participate in a learning activity. You are encouraged to first review the learning activity and the sign off requirements located in the “**For You and Your Supervisor**” section of this lesson. Reviewing this information before you begin the lesson will allow you to take proper notes and focus on key learning points.

**Hearing
Conservation
Program Overview**

The primary effect of excessive noise is loss of hearing. This hearing loss may be described by three “p-words:” **painless, progressive, and permanent**. The cumulative overexposure to hazardous noise levels causes hearing loss for millions of people during their working lives.

A significant number of Coast Guard missions expose personnel to a variety of high-intensity noise sources. To reduce the harmful impact of noise on personnel, the Coast Guard has implemented a hearing conservation program which is comprised the following elements:

- Identify, assess, and post hazardous noise sources
- Determine extent and disposition of personnel exposed
- Engineer methods to decrease noise
- Provide and require the use of hearing protection devices.
- Educate and advise personnel concerning hearing conservation
- Monitor employee hearing with periodic testing

**Hazardous Noise
Levels Defined**

Environments or equipment that produce **continuous noise levels at or above 85 dB(A)** time weighted average (TWA) and **impact noises exceeding 140 dB(A)** are considered hazardous and protective measures must be taken to reduce exposure to personnel.

**Hearing Protection
Requirements**

Hearing protective devices shall be worn by all personnel when they enter or work in an area where the operations generate noise levels of:

- Equal to or greater than 85 dB(A) continuous sound pressure level
- 140 dB peak sound pressure level or greater

A combination of insert type and over ear type hearing protective devices (double hearing protection) shall be worn in all areas where noise levels exceed 104 dB(A).

In cases where hearing protection devices do not reduce the individual’s effective exposure level below 85 dB(A) and engineering controls are impractical, administrative control of exposure time will be necessary.

**Hearing
Conservation
Training
Requirements**

All personnel exposed to hazardous noise shall receive a minimum of **one hour initial Hearing Conservation Training** and appropriate refresher training annually thereafter. This training shall cover the following topic:

- Description of the symptoms, mechanism, and consequences of temporary and permanent hearing loss
 - Elements of the hearing conservation program
 - Proper selection, wearing, and maintenance of hearing protective devices
 - Identification of hazardous noise sources at the command and safe work practices to be used to minimize exposure to hazardous noise
 - Description of audiometric testing which will include explanation of audiometric test results and the procedures involved in testing
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**Respiratory
Protection Program
Overview**

In the course of performing Coast Guard missions, maintenance and repairs, personnel are often exposed to harmful dusts, gases and smoke. The respiratory protection program is designed to allow personnel to work in these environments without exposing their respiratory tract to these harmful contaminants.

Units shall identify operations requiring respiratory protection.

Units having personnel who use respirators are required to implement a written respiratory protection program containing the following program elements:

- Appointment of a Respiratory Protection Program Coordinator (RPC)
 - Establish a written unit respiratory protection program
 - Fit test all respirator users.
 - Provide annual training for respirator users
 - Establish a respirator maintenance program and ensure proper hygiene procedures are followed
 - Ensure that respirator users are medically evaluated prior to fit testing
 - Establish/maintain the required documentation
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Role of Respiratory

Commanding officers and officers' in-charge shall appoint a unit

Protection Program Coordinator (RPC)

Respiratory Protection Program Coordinator (RPC) who will be responsible for coordinating and administering the program, including but not limited to the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the correct respirator is selected
 - Ensuring personnel are medically qualified to wear the selected respirator
 - Ensuring personnel are fit tested for the selected respirator
 - Ensuring that cartridge change-out schedules are followed
 - Ensuring that unit personnel receive respiratory protection training
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Member's Responsibility

Personnel required to wear a respirator are responsible for the following:

- Using respiratory protection in accordance with unit instructions
 - Inspecting the respirator prior to use and during cleaning of the respirator
 - Immediately reporting any malfunctions of the respirator to their supervisor
 - Conducting fit checks prior to using the respirator
 - Cleaning and maintaining the respirator as directed
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Respiratory Protection Training Requirements

Unit personnel required to wear a respirator shall receive training prior to respirator use and annually thereafter. This training shall cover the following topics:

- Why the respirator is necessary and how improper fit, usage, or maintenance can compromise the protective effect of the respirator
 - Limitations and capabilities of the respirator
 - How to inspect, put on and remove, use, and check the seals of the respirator
 - How to properly clean, disinfect, store, inspect, and maintain respirators
 - How to recognize medical signs and symptoms that may limit or prevent the effective use of the respirator
 - How to identify respiratory hazards in emergency situations
 - How to use the respirator effectively in emergency situations
 - The unit's site-specific program
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Policy Violations

If a unit member is found to be in violation of the written respiratory protection program, the member will be removed from the area requiring respiratory protection and not allowed to use a respirator until retraining has occurred.

Willful disregard of the unit's respiratory protection program could be deemed a violation of the UCMJ.

Learning Activity



Discuss with your unit safety officer the Coast Guard's policies on hearing and respiratory protection and complete all unit-required training.

For You and Your Supervisor

In order to meet the sign-off requirement for this lesson **YOU** must perform the following:

1. Prior to meeting with your unit safety officer review the contents of this lesson and organize your thoughts.
2. Discuss your chosen topic.

Before signing off on this requirement your **UNIT SAFETY OFFICER** must:

1. Make sure the member knows the Coast Guard's policies regarding hearing and respiratory protection programs and has completed all unit-specific training addressing these safety topics.
 2. Provide the member with corrective feedback and answer any questions they may have related to this lesson.
 3. Sign off the check-off sheet on the Record of Enlisted Professional Military Education (E-PME) Performance Requirements.
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References

The references used to develop this lesson can be found at CG Directives (CG-612), www.uscg.mil/directives:

- Coast Guard Medical Manual, COMDTINST M6000.1(series)
 - Coast Guard Safety and Environmental Health Manual COMDTINST M5100.47(series)
 - Technical Guide: Practices for Respiratory Protection, COMDTINST M6260.2(series)
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