1.0 **Purpose and Scope:** The purpose of this procedure is to prevent hearing damage to Facilities employees by defining the processes and methods they shall employ to protect themselves and others from potential injury-producing high noise sources. These processes and methods shall include the identification and marking of high noise sources, the use of engineering or administrative controls to reduce noise exposure, and the wearing of approved protective hearing devices as PPE to reduce the employee’s noise exposure.

2.0 **Definitions:**

2.1 **High Noise Sources:** Work areas or equipment that appears to the employee to present possible high noise sources shall be reported to EHS for a hazard assessment (noise monitoring). EHS, in consultation with area management shall determine the appropriate course of action to protect employees from hearing damage.

   2.1.1 There are three non-technical rules-of-thumb to use to determine if a work area has excessive noise levels:

   2.1.2 If it is necessary to speak very loudly or shout directly into the ear of a person in order to be understood, it is possible that the acceptable exposure limit for noise is being exceeded.

   2.1.3 If the employees say that they have heard noises and ringing in their ears at the end of the workday, they may have been exposed to too much noise.

   2.1.4 If employees complain that sounds of speech or music seem muffled after leaving work, but their hearing is fairly clear in the morning when they return to work, they have been exposed to noise levels that cause a partial temporary loss of hearing, which can become permanent upon repeated exposure.

2.2 **Administrative or Engineering Controls:** Administrative controls are measures taken to limit employee exposure to high noise sources, e.g., limiting the time that an employee may work in an identified high noise area. Engineering controls are measures employed to reduce the amount of noise exposure to employees, e.g., the substitution of equipment or materials that produce less noise or the use of “sound deadening” materials to encapsulate or reduce the transmission of noise.
2.3 **Protective Hearing Devices:** Protective hearing devices are personal protective equipment that is designed to protect the employee from injurious levels of noise encountered on the job. When worn, these devices reduce the transmission of harmful noise to the employee's ears. EHS shall determine and approve the hearing protective devices for use by Facilities employees. There are several types of hearing protection available:

2.3.1 **Disposable ear plugs:** Usually made of soft foam material, these plugs are compacted and inserted into the ear where they expand to form a snug fit.

2.3.2 **Ear muffs:** Ear muffs form an acoustic barrier by completely encompassing an individual's ears. Proper fit is affected by the size and shape of the wearer's ears and head.

2.3.3 **Pre-molded ear plugs:** Pre-molded ear plugs are usually made by a professional to fit a specific individual's ears.

2.3.4 Audio devices are NOT a substitute for hearing protection. Their use is discouraged.

2.4 **Signage:** Standardized hazard recognition signs shall be used to identify high noise areas and to inform employees that hearing PPE is required to be worn in the immediate area.

### 3.0 Responsibilities:

3.1 The Training Coordinator, Facilities is responsible for this procedure.
3.2 All staff members are responsible for adherence to this procedure.
3.3 Management is responsible for insuring an adequate supply of hearing PPE is available for use by their employees.
3.4 All staff members are responsible for having in their possession, caring for and using their hearing PPE when required as they would any other piece of issued safety equipment.

### 4.0 Instructions:

4.1 Employees who become aware of potential high noise areas shall inform their management so that the hazard can be assessed by EHS and appropriate actions taken. The employee shall take temporary protective measures such as the use of hearing protective devices, until the hazard assessment has been completed and the results implemented.

4.2 Employees shall comply with all hearing protection measures indicated by signage or the instructions of their supervision, e.g., “hearing protection must be worn when equipment is in operation”.

4.3 Employees who are required to wear hearing PPE shall be instructed on the proper use and maintenance of this equipment.
4.4 When potential high noise areas have been reported by employees, the EHS department will insure that proper assessment methods have been utilized to assess the hazard and shall make recommendations to management for the appropriate courses of action.

4.5 Managers shall be responsible for maintaining an adequate supply of hearing PPE for their employees.

4.6 Cost: Hearing protection/PPE is provided at no cost to the employee. However, it should be noted that this program indicates a significant monetary commitment to the safety and health of their employees by Management. Management expects the employees to use the hearing PPE when required and to keep these devices in good working condition.

4.7 Employees, who experience any of the symptoms of noise over-exposure as detailed in section 2.1 of this procedure, shall report these symptoms to their supervisor for medical evaluation and follow-up. Supervision should consult with EHS for the appropriate course of medical evaluation and treatment.

4.8 Employees are encouraged to engage in good personal preventive health practices both at work and at home.

5.0 References:

5.1 University's Safety & Security Policy 7-40, Personal Protective Equipment
5.2 29 CFR 1910.95 Occupational Noise Exposure
5.3 29 CFR 1910.132 Personal Protective Equipment

Effective Date: 09/23/09
Approved By: [Signature]
AVP of Facilities