

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 4-10

ISSUE: HEARING PROTECTION DURING EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Firefighters may be exposed to sound levels greater than an equivalent noise exposure level of 85 dBA.

The employer should develop a hearing protection program to identify when hearing protection should be used during emergency operations. This identification may be accomplished through noise level testing of fire apparatus and equipment likely to be used during emergency operations.

Hearing protection should be used by firefighters when operating power tools or operating or riding on fire apparatus where they are likely to be exposed to noise equal to or in excess of those shown in the table of equivalent noise exposures below.

Steady Sound Level dBA	Duration per 24 hour day
82	16 hours
85	8 hours
88	4 hours
91	2 hours
94	1 hour
97	30 minutes
100	15 minutes
103	7.5 minutes
106	3.75 minutes
109	1.88 minutes

The employer should establish a hearing conservation program to identify and reduce or eliminate potentially harmful sources of noise in the work environment **that are under the control of the employer**. Employers should try to eliminate firefighters' exposure to noise levels above those shown in the table by engineering out the noise with better mufflers and/or insulation if appropriate. However, personal protective devices should be used where reduction or elimination strategies do not achieve the required exposure reduction.

Note: When in fire stations, reference the requirements of Section 139 of the Regulations for Industrial Establishments (Regulation 851).