

Falmouth Fire-EMS Operating Guideline

Hearing Protection SOG

Objective: To provide a program for hearing protection & conservation for all Falmouth Fire-EMS Department personnel.

General Information:

When responding to incidents with sirens or operating in high noise conditions, noise levels may become uncomfortably loud. OSHA has deemed the 80 decibel level as a recommended high level. Noise levels may not reach this level but employees are encouraged to utilize hearing protection devices whenever they feel necessary and as prescribed below. When noise levels become “uncomfortable” hearing protection shall be worn.

Guidelines:

1. Responding:

- a. All apparatus are to be equipped with hearing protection in sufficient quantity for all occupants. This protection may be ear muff style protectors or radio/intercom headsets. When personnel feel that noise levels are too high these may be worn. On apparatus with radio/intercom headsets, these shall be utilized when responding with sirens. Personnel are also encouraged to have personal ear plugs available while on duty.

2. High noise environments:

- a. In situations involving training, normal work routine or emergency incidents personnel may encounter high noise levels. Personnel are encouraged to use hearing protection from apparatus or other sources when they feel noise levels are high enough to warrant. This protection may be muffs or earplugs provided by the Department, individual or site hosts.
- b. Exposure of personnel to high noise levels with or without protection is to be avoided in as much as practical. This includes shutting down high noise equipment as soon as practical, moving to a lower noise area, and limiting time spent in a high noise area.
- c. In Department facilities with identified high noise areas, the Department shall provide hearing protection readily available to that area. Personnel are also encouraged to have personal ear plugs available while on duty.

3. Industry site compliance:

- a. Whenever personnel are at a commercial or industrial host site they shall, at a minimum, comply with that site’s safety regulations

concerning hearing protection. Personnel may utilize Department protection, individual protection or site host equipment. Personnel are also encouraged to have personal ear plugs available while on duty.

4. Emergency hearing protection:

- a. Due to the uncontrolled nature of our work environment, personnel may be unexpectedly exposed to high noise environments without proper hearing protection. Personnel in those situations are encouraged to take emergency hearing protection measures as practical. These may include leaving the area, covering ears with hands, closing off high noise areas or other makeshift methods. Personnel are also encouraged to have personal ear plugs available while on duty.

These guidelines may be changed or altered by the Fire Chief at any time.