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The Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC) mission is to advance best practices in hearing conservation programs. Protecting the auditory health of workers is essential to preserving the health of individuals, workforce populations, and the productivity of the Nation and its economy.

Noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most prevalent occupational conditions arising from a wide spectrum of industries. Occupational hearing loss is preventable through a hierarchy of controls, which prioritize the use of engineering controls over administrative controls and personal protective equipment. These controls in addition with the requirements of exposure monitoring and medical surveillance are packaged into Hearing Conservation Programs promulgated in Federal standards and regulations published by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Mining Safety and Health Administration, and emphasized elsewhere through OSHA State Plans, and other Federal and private entities. Employers are required to offer medical surveillance to each employee whose exposure to noise exceeds a threshold of 85 decibels measured in A-weighting over an eight hour time weighted average. The medical surveillance consists of a hearing assessment including otoscopy and audiometry.

CAOHC recognizes that the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted routine ambulatory and elective surgical healthcare delivery across the nation. As such, CAOHC recommends audiometric evaluations be suspended indefinitely. Most routine occupational hearing conservation audiometric examinations are not medically essential and, given the high infection rate of COVID-19, CAOHC believes suspension of this medical surveillance examination will protect healthcare workers, consumers, and conserve the supply of personal protective equipment.

CAOHC recommends the suspension continue until medical facilities are advised to resume normal operational conditions in accordance with Federal, state, and local public health authorities. Occupational Hearing Conservation Practitioners are urged to monitor guidance about COVID-19 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, OSHA, and CAOHC.

Sincerely,

Raúl Alexander Mirza, DO, MPH, MSc, CPS/A, FACOEM

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