



## **Advice for employees attending for health surveillance**

International SOS provides health surveillance for Highland Council employees who are exposed to hazards whilst at work, for example: noise, fumes, chemicals, dust and/or vibration. The Council has a duty of care to you and in order to check that the hazards are not affecting your health, and that the safeguards in place are working correctly, they are required under law to provide health surveillance.

### **The law:**

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005

The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005

### **FAQs**

#### **Why do I need health surveillance?**

If you are working with tools or in an area where you are exposed to any hazardous materials, noise or vibration the Council has to provide appropriate health surveillance. This is a legal requirement and is based on the assessment of risk; the health surveillance you require depends on the job you do and the tools and/or hazards you are exposed to.

#### **Can I opt out of attending for health surveillance?**

If you are working in an area, or with tools, which are covered by the laws outlined above, then you are required to attend for health surveillance. Attendance is mandatory, not voluntary, and you cannot opt out.

#### **What will happen when I arrive for my appointment?**

The Occupational Health adviser will introduce him or herself to you and request that you complete a questionnaire. The questions are about lungs, hearing, skin and vibration, and depend on your answering them honestly. If you have any problem with this form, the adviser will be happy to help you - just ask.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, the adviser will go over it with you and may ask a few more questions depending on the responses you have put entered. The adviser will only ask questions related to the questionnaire, usually to clarify something.

#### **What tests will I have to do?**

Depending on what risk you are exposed to, the health surveillance will involve what is appropriate for you, including:

**Audiometric (Hearing) Testing:** first of all the adviser will examine your ears with an otoscope. This is a torch which allows her to look in your ear to see if there are any external problems (you may have had this done by your GP or practice nurse). If you have a build up of wax, for example, this may impact on the results of your hearing test. If you do have a lot of wax or a heavy cold or sinusitis you may be asked to come back at a later date, as the results of the test will not be accurate. Assuming all of this is satisfactory, the adviser will explain the test to you.

It would be helpful if you would bring your hearing protection with you to this appointment.

**Spirometry (lung function) Testing:** this test requires you to blow into a cardboard tube. The first breath is to get an approximate measurement of the size of your lungs; the next 2 are to see how well your lungs are working. If you are asthmatic, some parts of this test will be familiar to you, as they are similar to peak flow testing. The adviser will demonstrate exactly what you are to do before you start the test, so don't worry.

If you have inhalers it would be helpful if you would bring them to this appointment.

**Vibration surveillance:** this is carried out over a number of stages, but initially involves answering a questionnaire and any other questions the adviser thinks are appropriate. If there is anything that requires further checking a further appointment will be arranged for you with the Occupational Health Physician (OHP). If this happens the adviser will explain what the next stage entails.

**Skin surveillance:** again involves answering a questionnaire. If there is anything of concern the adviser may refer you to our OHP for further advice and recommendations.

**Results:** following the completion of your health surveillance the results will be explained to you. Any relevant advice regarding the hazards and risks that you may be exposed to will be issued at this time.

### **Who will see my Occupational Health records?**

The standards of confidentiality for records held by your general practitioner (or any hospital specialist you may have seen) also apply to Occupational Health records. Consequently, neither your manager nor HR staff has access to your records.

RS Occupational Health will provide your manager with a database which includes your name, date of birth, designation, date the health surveillance was carried out, and the recall date (in most cases this will be a year from the initial health surveillance but if the specific test has been unsatisfactory then a shorter review period will be indicated). If a referral, or another appointment is required, this will be indicated. No confidential medical information will be enclosed. However, if recommendations are required this will be indicated in order that your manager can act on these recommendations.

An OH file will be made up for the individual staff member containing their completed paperwork. This will be held at International SOS's office at 10 Lotland Street, Inverness. No one from Highland Council can access this file without the direct permission of the individual member of staff.