



## **UH IBC: Earphones in Biological Laboratories Guidance**

Guideline 1.0 Version 1.0

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Maintain awareness of your surroundings (no listening to music using headphones, earbuds); recognizes that many staff and students use audio equipment (audio-visual & multi-media production etc.) and other devices (MP3 players, iPods, etc.) with headphones/earphones/earbuds and that this may be directly associated with work or study. This information sheet aims to provide advice to ensure that the use of these devices does not impact on the health and safety of users and others at the University of Hawaii.

The following points should be considered by all University staff and students to minimize the potential health and safety impacts associated with the use of audio headphones/earphones/earbuds.

### **General**

- If the wearer's situational awareness is reduced to the extent that their health and safety is compromised by the use of these devices e.g. they cannot hear emergency alarms, calls for help etc., then these devices must not be used.
- The use of high volumes can cause permanent noise-induced hearing loss. If someone standing nearby can hear what the wearer is listening to, the volume is too loud.
- Staff and students should consider using a single earpiece whenever possible, to assist in maintaining awareness of what is happening around them.
- Headphones/earphones/earbuds should be maintained in a clean and hygienic state. It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions when cleaning these devices due to the potential for damage to the electrical/electronic components contained in the unit.
- Internal units such as earbuds should be single user only due to hygiene issues.

### **Activities requiring the use of headphones/earphones/earbuds**

- Where activities require the wearing of headphones/earphones/earbuds, a risk assessment must be completed prior to their use. This is especially important in laboratories, workshops, studios or any other area where harmful biological, substances and materials e.g. infectious or toxic substances, etc. are used.
- If a risk assessment indicates there is no alternative but to use the headphones/earphones/earbuds, approval must be obtained from area managers, supervisors, etc., prior to the use of any such items in the workplace.
- Headphones/earphones/earbuds must be stored in such a way that minimizes the risk of them being contaminated by biological, chemical or other substances and materials.
- Ideally, external units such as headphones and earphones should be single user. Where this is not practical, it is important to ensure that the units are cleaned according to manufacturer's instructions prior to transfer between individuals.
- Headphones/earphones/earbuds must not be repeatedly touched, adjusted or re-fitted to the ear where there is risk of contamination from biological, chemical or other substances and materials.