Don’t Turn a Deaf Ear to Noise



WHAT’S AT STAKE?

Sometimes people take hearing for granted. Picture yourself unable to hear. Visualize how your quality of life will be affected. It is important to learn about noise hazards and how to protect yourself against noise hazards.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

Hearing damage can occur from a sudden single exposure like the sound of an explosion, a jet engine, an air tool or other source. However, hearing loss usually occurs from lower doses of noise over time.

The damage is cumulative. Hearing loss cannot be reversed by medicine or surgery. A hearing aid cannot completely restore hearing either.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Employer responsibility:

Many workers do not know that it is an employer’s responsibility to provide a workplace that is as free as possible from hearing hazards. If you have ideas about how workplace noise can be reduced pass them on to your supervisor. The sounds of machinery can sometimes be reduced by better equipment maintenance, installing different floor surfaces underneath the equipment to reduce vibration, placing sound barriers between the workers and the machinery, or separating the workers from machinery by an enclosure.

It is also your employer’s responsibility to calculate the hearing risk and to determine the right hearing protection equipment for you to use. That will depend on the level and the duration of the noise you are exposed to. Good hearing protection must be comfortable and fit properly. It must also be compatible with other personal protective equipment (PPE) such as a hard hat.

Hearing Protective Devices:

Nothing can totally block out sound, but hearing protection devices can reduce the noise reaching the ears. Some block out a portion of the noise. Electronic hearing protection devices are designed to permit sounds such as conversations and warnings to reach the ear but they prevent harmful sound pressure levels. Other electronic hearing protectors pick up desirable sounds and amplify them. Some earmuffs or

earplugs are combined with communication systems for noisy areas.

Specially-designed hearing protectors are made to wear with other PPE. Some attach to slots bracket on hard hats or helmets for combined hearing, head and face protection. Cooling pads are even available for earmuffs worn in hot work environments.

Earmuffs-filled with liquid or foam – come in various styles for function and comfort. Earmuffs are fitted with a headband made of metal or plastic. Some headbands can be folded or put around the front back of the neck in various positions.

Earplugs can be remolded to fit all wearers, or custom molded to fit exactly. They can be made expandable or non-expandable. They may be either reusable or disposable. Earplugs are available on cords you can wear around your neck so you can take them out and put them in easily.

Worker Responsibility:

Your part in all of this is to co-operate with the hearing protection program in your work area.

Take the regular hearing tests and wear the recommended PPE. Take good care of your PPE by cleaning it according to the manufacturer’s recommendations and replacing it as needed.

FINAL WORD

Hearing damage is permanent, but it can be prevented. Take hearing protection seriously.