

Topic: Hearing Protection Safety

Listen Up: Heed These Hearing Protection DOs and DON'Ts

Close your eyes for a moment and call to mind your favorite sound. Is it the sound of waves crashing against the shore? Birds chirping? People laughing? Thunder? What about the sound of bacon sizzling in a pan?

The human auditory system is complex and amazing, capable of detecting a wide range of frequencies. It's also a delicate system, capable of being permanently destroyed in an instant or gradually over time.

Not All Sounds Are Pleasant

We live in a noisy world. And some workplaces are dangerously noisy. Every day, millions of people are exposed to damaging noise in their workplace at levels that put them at risk of hearing loss.

To address this, hearing loss prevention programs have been developed to adequately reduce the risk of workers suffering permanent hearing damage. These programs include noise level monitoring, engineering and administrative controls, audiometric evaluation, record-keeping, and use of hearing protection devices. And you play a role in the success of these programs by following some basic rules regarding your hearing protection.

Hearing Protection Devices *Dos* and *Don'ts*

Here are some ways you can reduce your risk of suffering damage to your hearing at work:

DO:

- ✓ Wear hearing protection when the sound level in your workplace exceeds 85 decibels (about the sound of a blender).
- ✓ Choose hearing protection that's appropriate for your workplace and for you. Your options are:
 - Ear plugs, which can be either pre-molded or moldable, disposable or reusable. Ear plugs are inserted to block the ear canal.
 - Ear muffs, which are made of sound-attenuating material. Ear muffs have soft ear cushions and hard outer cups that are held together by a headband and are fitted around the ear.
- ✓ Have your hearing protection fitted properly. The anatomy of the ear and the ear canal is not the same for every person.
- ✓ If you choose ear muffs, ensure the headband fits tightly enough to maintain a proper seal, but is not too tight for comfort. If you wear prescription or safety glasses, ensure that these are not breaking the seal between the ear muff and the skin.
- ✓ Learn how to properly insert ear plugs.
- ✓ Check your hearing protection regularly for wear and tear.
- ✓ Wash your hearing protection according to the manufacturer's instructions.

DO NOT:

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TOOLBOX TALKS



- ✗ Choose ear plugs when you are working in an area with a noise level over 105 decibels (about the sound of a power lawn mower).
- ✗ Use radio headsets in place of hearing protection. They do not protect your ears against exposure to noise.
- ✗ Modify your hearing protection.
- ✗ Wear ear plugs if you have an ear infection. If the infection is minor, you can wear ear muffs instead.
- ✗ Insert ear plugs with dirty hands, as you can introduce dirt and bacteria into your ears, causing an ear infection.
- ✗ Allow hair and clothing to interfere with the fit of the hearing protection.
- ✗ Remove hearing protection for even a short time during noisy work, as it will substantially reduce the protection.
- ✗ Wear ear cushions or plugs that are no longer pliable.
- ✗ Wear ear muffs when the head bands become so stretched that the ear cushions no longer fit snugly against the head.

Conclusion

Imagine what a quiet and lonely life it would be without being able to hear the world around you. Learn about your employer's hearing loss prevention program and do all that you can to protect your hearing.

Quiz:

1. Ear plugs are adequate protection in any noisy environment.
True or False

2. Radio headsets provide some hearing protection.
True or False

3. Which of the following might interfere with the fit of hearing protection?
 - A. Hair
 - B. Clothing
 - C. Prescription glasses
 - D. Safety glasses
 - E. All of the above

4. Which of the following should be worn in areas where the noise level is over 105 dBA?
 - A. Ear plugs
 - B. Ear muffs
 - C. Radio headsets
 - D. Any of the above

5. The anatomy of the ear and the ear canal is the same for all people.
True or False

1 False, 2 False, 3 E, 4 B, 5 False

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