



SAFE WORK

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SPOT THE HAZARD
ASSESS THE RISK
FIND A SAFER WAY
EVERYDAY

No. 179
September 2010

Use of Portable Audio / Entertainment Units with Ear/Headphones

Potential hazard:

It can be very hazardous for workers to use portable entertainment units with earphones or headset devices in or around the workplace as these devices impair a worker's ability to hear surrounding sounds. This is especially true if the user is working around moving equipment or in circumstances where a worker must be able to hear warning sounds. Furthermore, because these devices compromise the user's general alertness and concentration, they may be considered a hazard at any workplace.

Some examples of cautionary circumstances include:

- **the need to be alerted** to surrounding sounds or activity,
- **receiving verbal direction** and signals from other workers at the workplace,
- **any other circumstance** where the wearing of such a device impairs the ability of a worker to hear necessary sounds that ensure the worker's own safety and health, as well as that of co-workers.



How to control the hazard:

Risk Assessment

Employers and supervisors must determine the potential hazards presented by workers using portable entertainment devices with ear / headphones at the workplace. Hazards would be determined by conducting a risk assessment, in consultation with the workplace safety and health committee or representative.

If the risk assessment determines use of these devices to be hazardous at the workplace, it is recommended that employers develop and implement a policy to prohibit or restrict use of these devices at their workplace or job site. For example, these devices should be prohibited for workers operating or working near heavy mobile equipment. There may be other circumstances where hazards are controlled, or the potential for injury is very low. In these situations, employers may decide to allow use of these devices within set limits.

If requests are made to use portable entertainment units with ear/headphones at work, the safety and health committee should be consulted and the issue evaluated.

Additional workplace safety and health information available at: www.safemanitoba.com

Workplace Safety and Health Division Contact Information:

Winnipeg: (204) 945-3446
Toll-Free: 1-866-888-8186 (Manitoba only)
24-Hour Emergency Line: (204) 945-0581

Publications/resources available at: www.safemanitoba.com

