

SAFETY TRAINING TALK

Date

TOPIC: NOISE AND HEARING PROTECTION

We all know that **noise** can cause a lot of problems for us in the workplace. On a psychological level it can startle us, annoy us, and even disrupt our concentration. It can interfere with our verbal communication, which can have serious consequences in terms of productivity and safety.

And, if loud enough, it can even affect our health - causing hearing loss and circulatory problems.

If the human ear is exposed to high levels of noise for a sufficient time, some hearing loss can occur. Some of the factors which influence the effect of noise exposure are:

- ☞ Individual susceptibility
- ☞ Frequency of the sound
- ☞ Length of employment in the noisy environment
- ☞ Other characteristics of the sound - ex. is it continuous, intermittent, intense, etc.
- ☞ Total energy of the sound
- ☞ Daily time exposure

Because noise may affect some people more than others, it's imperative that whenever there is loud noise in the workplace, even if it's sporadic, consideration should be given to using hearing protection. For example, if you or someone near you is using a powder actuated tool.

There are various types of Hearing Protection Devices. Each type provides a different level of protection. The two most prevalent kinds are:

Disposable Ear Plugs - these offer a lot of protection - if inserted fully into the ear. However, be sure your hands and fingers are free of dirt and grease because you could transfer grit or grime to the plug and then cause ear canal infection.

Ear Muffs - these fit over the entire outer ear. Their effectiveness depends on how tight they are and how good the seal is between the ear and the muff. The ear piece of eyeglasses can cause a "leak", so be careful.

Obviously, on our jobsites there are many machines which create noise. And if you work near them for an extended amount of time you could run the risk of being affected by the noise.

Finally, let's remember what we said about noise causing a variety of problems. At times, all jobsites are noisy. So overcompensate with your other senses. If you can't hear, then be more attentive with your eyes. Be aware of who and what's around you at all times.

And, when communicating in noisy environments, make sure you have eye contact with the other person and be certain they understand your message. Don't assume they "heard" you, because chances are they didn't. If necessary use clearly understood hand signals.

As always, being aware of hazards in the workplace, like noise, is the key to working safe.

End the meeting by discussing any particular safety concerns you have this week; and have everyone sign this sheet.