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TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS OF ILLINOIS RISK MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

RISK REMINDER

HEARING PROTECTION *LISTEN TO WARNINGS ABOUT HEARING SAFETY*

Although we don't think about it often, many activities in our lives are made possible and more pleasant by the sounds that accompany them. Think about what your world might be like if you lost your hearing. You couldn't listen to your favorite song on the radio, or hear the crowd cheering for your favorite sports team. You would miss out on a lot.



Hearing loss can also make it difficult for you to earn a living. You can't work safely on a construction site if you don't hear warning signals or if you can't understand what your co-worker is trying to tell you from a distance.



Unfortunately, noise-induced hearing loss is too common among construction workers. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, by the age of 25, the average carpenter's hearing is the same as that of an otherwise healthy 50-year old worker who has not been exposed noise.

Fortunately, hearing loss is preventable. Although OSHA regulations require a hearing conservation program when the noise level exceeds 90 decibels (dB) over an 8-hour day, you should still do everything you can to prevent hearing loss at all times. Because the damage can be gradual and cumulative, most construction workers suffer hearing loss after 15 to 20 years on the job. Take responsibility for protecting your hearing.

There are three ways to protect your hearing:

1. Engineering controls include enclosing high-noise areas, installing sound-dampening devices, or using equipment designed to produce less noise.
2. Administrative controls involve operating noisy equipment and machinery on shifts, or rotating workers out of noisy areas for part of a shift.
3. Personal protective equipment is hearing protection such as earplugs, canal caps, or earmuffs designed to reduce the level of sound entering the ear.

Comfort. When protection feels comfortable and stays in place, people will wear it. That's why a good hearing protection program offers a variety of hearing protectors that meet the NRR rating for the job at hand. The employees can try the different styles and see what feels best for them. Just like shoes, one size or shape does not fit all. 1910.95(i)(3) Employees shall be given the opportunity to select their hearing protectors from a variety of suitable hearing protectors provided by the employer.

Communication. Be sure to protect hearing and allow clear communication with co-workers. There will be an adjustment period for employees wearing hearing protectors for the first time. They may feel it hampers their efforts to hear the things they want and need to hear. But, they will adjust. In some extremely noisy applications, it may be necessary to provide hearing protectors that have volume controls that filter out damaging noises while allowing the wearer to enhance the volume of verbal communications.

Off-the-job activities can also be noisy. Boating, rock concerts, hunting, and sporting events produce lots of noise. Loud music in your car or on your iPod can also impact your hearing. Talk to your family about hearing protection and make them aware of the hazards of noise.

For more information, contact TOIRMA at (888) 562-7861

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