



Toolbox Talk: Hearing Protection

Take a moment and consider going through life with a constant ringing in your ears. Imagine trying to communicate with your friends, family and co-workers if you became partially or even completely deaf. Think of the changes you would need to make to adjust to not being able to hear or communicate with the rest of the world. Wearing the proper forms of personal protective equipment (PPE) can help prevent hearing loss due to noise exposure.

There are two main categories of hearing protection: earplugs and earmuffs. Both come in a variety of types and sizes and have their own advantages and disadvantages.

Earplugs are either disposable or reusable. Disposable earplugs are cylindrical roll-down plugs. They are rolled into a small cylinder before being inserted into the ear. They then expand within the ear canal. Roll-down earplugs can be difficult for some people to manipulate and using dirty hands to roll them to the proper size can cause ear problems. Plain cotton is not an acceptable protective device.

Another style of earplugs connects to a band or a cord. These are usually easier to keep track of and can hang from the employee's neck when not in use. Many corded earplugs have the same roll-down earplug at the end of the cord and have the same principles as mentioned previously. Banded earplugs were designed for easy insertion and removal, but not to be worn for extended periods of time.

Earmuffs resemble stereo headphones. They have a molded plastic cup that seals around the ear with either a foam or fluid cushion. Ears must be fully encapsulated within the cup in order for the device to be effective. This type of hearing protection is susceptible to environmental contamination and high temperatures can make them uncomfortable to wear. However, they are effective when used with earplugs in extremely high noise areas.

Discussion Topics:

- Identify work areas where hearing protection is necessary.
- Identify PPE available for the work area. Does it sufficiently meet the needs of the workers?
- Discuss engineering and work practice strategies that could be used to eliminate the need to wear PPE in that area.
- Discuss how being hearing impaired can affect a person's life.

Anyone have a question or comment about Hearing Protection? Please be sure to sign-in on the training certification form.

The information provided in the Toolbox talks is for general informational purposes only and intended as a guideline only. All information is provided in good faith: However, NTMA makes no representations of any kind, express or implied, regarding the accuracy, adequacy, validity, reliability, or completeness of any information provided herein.

Refer to local, state and or federal laws for complete standards and regulations regarding the topic.

TOOLBOX TALK SIGN IN FORM

Toolbox Topic Covered: Hearing Protection

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Training led by: _____

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

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