



Toolbox Talk: Hearing Conservation, Headphones, and Bluetooth on the Job Site.

Introduction/Overview:

We all prefer the sound of music over the noise of the job site. You can now listen to your favorite jam while on the job. It is just a matter of clicking an app on your phone and choosing from the large variety of earbuds and headphones on the market. The problem is that the same music may be robbing you of the ability ever to hear it again. Of course, some jobs require you to communicate with others in noisy situations, so you may have to wear an earpiece. Whether wearing an earpiece for work or earbuds for pleasure, too much volume may cause permanent hearing loss. In the United States, hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition after high blood pressure and arthritis. Hearing loss has been linked to depression, cognitive (mental) decline, and heart problems, such as high blood pressure and heart disease.

Statistics:

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year about, 22 million U.S. workers are exposed to hazardous noise levels at work. Earbuds and headphones may cause more hearing damage than the actual work noise.

According to a research article published by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), 25% of current workers had a history of occupational noise exposure. Twelve percent had hearing difficulty, 24% had hypertension, 28% had elevated cholesterol; many of these cases can be attributed to occupational noise exposure.

Talking Points:

Top Five things you can do to prevent hearing loss:

1. Turn down the volume – Simple and effective.
2. Use noise-canceling headphones – Passive noise-canceling headphones use high-density foam to block external sound. Active noise-canceling headphones monitor external noise and generate sound waves that cancel noise.
3. Use headphones instead of earbuds – Earbuds put the music source closer to the eardrum. In addition to the distance factor, headphones allow music to disperse somewhat before entering the ear canal.
4. Take listening breaks – The recommendation is a 10-minute break every 60 minutes.

Developed by:

5. Set volume limit – The general rule of thumb is eighty percent volume for a maximum of 90 minutes at a time. If you are listening for an amount of time longer than 90 minutes, reduce the volume. The longer you listen, the lower the volume should be.

Additional Discussion Notes:

Final Thoughts:

Hearing loss is usually gradual, by the time you realize you suffer from it, it's too late to do anything about it. Prevention is the key to maintaining your hearing.

NOTE: Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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References:

American Journal of Industrial Medicine

Cardiovascular conditions, hearing difficulty, and occupational noise exposure within U.S. industries and occupations

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ajim.22833>

CNET Health and Wellness

5 Ways to Prevent Hearing Loss While Using Headphones

<https://www.cnet.com/health/do-headphones-cause-hearing-loss/>

Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials

How to Rock Out with Ear Buds or Headphones Without Damaging Your Hearing

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-rock-out-with-ear-buds-or-headphones-without-damaging-your-hearing/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention/National Institute Occupational Safety and Health
Occupational Hearing Loss (OHL) Surveillance

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ohl/default.html>