A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Hearing Loss Prevention

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Overview: Covers basics of hearing loss and noise exposure, prevention and how to properly wear ear plugs

Purpose: Remind and inform employees about the hazards of noise and best methods to prevent hearing damage.

Preparation:
- Read and become familiar with this Quick Take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.*
- Bring disposable foam ear plugs or other hearing protection devices to demonstrate to the class how to use them properly.

Handouts: Quick Review of Safety—Hearing Loss Prevention

Notes: Certain noise exposures may require employers to implement a hearing conservation program. The minimum threshold for an OSHA hearing conservation program begins at 85 decibels taken over an eight-hour time-weighted average. More information about hearing conservation programs can be found in various MCIT publications, such as "Public Works Loss Prevention Best Practice Guide," "Solid Waste Management Loss Prevention Best Practice Guide" and "Facility Management Loss Prevention Best Practices Guide" available at MCIT.org.

Noise-induced Hearing Loss

It can be a noisy world, from equipment, entertainment, the workplace and recreation, we are often exposed to loud noises. [*Instructor Prompt:* Ask the class to offer other examples of equipment they use or areas in the workplace that offer long-term exposure to noise]

Loud noises can damage structures within the ear, causing permanent damage. Further exposures can cause additional damage, leading to cumulative effects that accelerate natural hearing loss due to aging. There is currently no medical procedure that can fix this damage, and hearing aids do not restore lost hearing.

Long-term exposure to loud noises can lead to gradually diminished hearing. This gradual hearing loss can happen so slowly that individuals often do not notice the hearing loss until the damage is done.

Other times this hearing loss can occur quickly from extremely loud events, such as explosions, gunfire or other loud noises near the ear.

Although there are multiple causes of hearing loss that we often cannot control, we can limit our exposure to noise and make efforts to protect our hearing. So please pay attention; your health and safety are important to us. We don't want you to get injured.

Preventing Noise-induced Hearing Loss

Identifying noises that are loud enough to cause injury can be difficult. Potentially injurious noises are generally defined as those greater than 85 decibels for a specific amount of time. [*Instructor Note*: See examples on the right, but be aware these are approximate.] Consider the following methods to help prevent hearing loss both on and off the job:

80-90 Decibels	100+ Decibels
Hand Drill	Snow Blower
Push Mower	Leaf Blower
Gas Trimmer	Chain Saw
Air Compressor	Circular Saw
Shop Vac	Car Horn

- Identify sources of loud noises: snowmobile, lawnmowers, firearms, power tools, etc.
- Avoid loud sounds whenever possible or minimize your time around them.
- Turn down sound levels when possible.
- Use hearing protection when other measures are unavailable or not feasible to control sound.
- Work with an audiologist or doctor.

Wearing Hearing Protection

[Instructor Note: Personal protective equipment is the last line of defense and other methods should be pursued prior to resorting to hearing protection.]

A common method to help prevent hearing loss is to wear hearing protection. When using hearing protection, it is important to follow the directions for use. Improperly worn hearing protection does not offer the indicated levels of protection. [*Instructor Prompt:* Discuss personal protection equipment and when it should be worn and areas where specific hearing protection is required.]

One of the most common types of hearing protection are disposable foam ear plugs. To wear this type of ear plug properly, please follow the next steps. [*Instructor Prompt:* Demonstrate to the class how to use these ear plugs. Have your team follow along. Inform employees where they can access hearing protection. See pictures at CDC.gov/niosh/mining/content/earplug.html.]

- Squeeze the foam plug to compress it to make it easier to fit within the ear. As ear canal sizes vary, please select the size of plug that fits best for you.
- Grab the top curve of the ear with the opposite hand. For example, use the left hand to grab the right top of the ear.
- Pull the ear upward to straighten the ear canal.
- Push the compressed foam plug into the ear and wait for it to expand before removing your finger holding it in. Be sure to do this prior to entering a noisy area or conducting noisy work.
  - The length of time to hold it in the ear varies by manufacturer, but it is recommended to wait at least 10 seconds to give the plugs a chance to expand.
- After the ear plug expands to fit the ear canal, do the same process with the other ear.

When finished with the noisy environment or task, take the ear plugs out and dispose of them. Do not reuse disposable ear plugs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are our greatest noise exposures at work?
- How else can we limit our exposures to loud noise?

Hearing Loss Prevention Session Planning and Review

Trainer	Training Date
Department(s)	

TRAINING GOALS

- Employees understand the hazards of noise exposure.
- Employees know and follow basic practices to prevent noise exposure.
- Employees are aware of how to use disposable foam ear plugs.

RESOURCES

- "Noise Induced Hearing Loss," U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
- Chapter 34, Hearing Conservation in "Public Works Loss Prevention Best Practices Guide," Chapter 34, Hearing Conservation in "Solid Waste Management Loss Prevention Best Practices Guide," or Chapter 24, Hearing Conservation in "Facility Management Loss Prevention Best Practices Guide," Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust, MCIT.org/resource/
- "Preventing Noise Induced Hearing Loss," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

Attendance Record

Training Session Hearing Loss Prevention

Trainer Training Date

Participant Name (printed)	Participant Signature