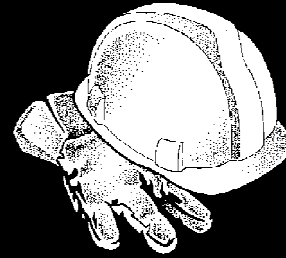



TRAINING GUIDE

NOISE



1994

Before you begin the meeting...

- Does this topic relate to the work the crew is doing? If not, choose another topic.*
- Did you read this Training Guide and fill in the blanks where the  appears? (To find the information you need, look over the Safety Walkaround Checklist for this topic.)*
- Did you bring samples of hearing protection devices (earplugs and/or earmuffs) to show the crew during the meeting?*

Begin: (Try mouthing the words to your introduction instead of speaking out loud, so the crew can imagine what it's like when someone can't hear.)

Do you ask people to speak louder so you can hear? Do you have to turn the TV or radio up so loud that other people complain? Years of work on a construction site can rob you of your hearing. These may be your warning signs that something is wrong.

Don't wait until you lose your hearing to do something about it. Hearing loss usually occurs little by little, but once it's lost you'll never get it back.

You or a crew member may want to add a personal story about noise or hearing loss.

Next, discuss with the crew what jobs and equipment may cause excessive noise at this particular job site:



ASK THE CREW THESE QUESTIONS:

After each question, give the crew time to suggest possible answers. Use the information following each question to add points that no one mentions.

- 1. True or False? Even if your hearing gets bad, all you need is some time off the job and it will come back.**
 - False! It's true that many construction workers experience **temporary** hearing loss, which clears up if you're off the job for a while. But noise can also cause **permanent** hearing loss. With this kind, you never get back to normal. Even a hearing aid won't help much. That's why it's so important to protect yourself from noise.

2. Don't you have to work in construction for a long time to get permanent hearing loss?

- Not always. A very loud noise can begin to damage your hearing right away, even if you're only exposed to it for a short time.

3. So is noise dangerous only if it's very loud?

- No. A moderate level of noise can also cause permanent hearing loss if you're exposed to it day after day for a period of months or years. It can damage your hearing gradually, even if it doesn't seem that loud to you.
- The louder the noise and the longer you are exposed, the greater is the permanent damage to your hearing.

4. Noise is measured in *decibels (dB)*. A noise above 120 dB is so loud that it causes pain in your ears. Cal/OSHA says no worker may be exposed to more than 90 dB, as an average over an 8-hour shift. This is called the *permissible exposure limit (PEL)* for noise. What are some examples of noise on a construction site that might be over 90 dB?

- Heavy trucks (around 100 decibels)
- Power saws (around 110 decibels)
- Riveting on steel (around 130 decibels)

5. What if you only work around loud noise for a short time—not eight hours a day? What do Cal/OSHA regulations say about that?

- Cal/OSHA says you can be exposed to noise louder than 90 db if it's just for a short time. The louder the noise, the shorter the time you can work in the area without damaging your hearing.

6. What are some clues that there might be too much noise on the job?

- As a rule of thumb, the decibel level **could** be above the legal limit if you have to raise your voice to be heard one foot away.
- Other signs of too much noise are **temporary hearing loss** or **ringing in the ears**.
- Everyone is different. Some workers will experience hearing loss even if noise is below the legal limit. Since there's no way of telling if you're the one whose hearing will be the first to go, it's best to avoid noise exposure whenever possible.
- If there's any reason to think the noise level may be too high, the company can have the level measured with instruments. This is called **noise monitoring**.

On this job we have or have not done noise monitoring.

Results (locations and dB levels): _____



7. What does Cal/OSHA require us to do to protect against noise?

- **Use quieter equipment** when possible—quieter models are available nowadays.
- **Reduce noise exposure** as much as possible by using sound barriers, different work processes, or regular rotation of workers out of noisy areas.
- **Use effective hearing protection** (like ear plugs or ear muffs) when needed.

- **Train** workers on:
 - the hazards of noise
 - ways to prevent hearing loss
 - how to wear ear protectors, change them, and clean them (if applicable).

8. When do you need to use hearing protection?

- You need it whenever noise levels are above the Cal/OSHA limit. But rules on ear protection should be reasonable. Sometimes you need it and sometimes you don't.
- The company is responsible for supplying and maintaining hearing protectors.

*Show the crew the ear plugs and ear muffs you brought to the meeting. **Demonstrate** how to use them. Explain where they are kept and any special instructions.*



9. Aren't ear plugs uncomfortable? Can't it be dangerous to use them?

- Ear plugs don't have to be uncomfortable. Cal/OSHA says that the company should make sure ear protectors fit you and are reasonably comfortable.
- Some workers believe that wearing ear plugs is awkward or even dangerous because you can't hear voices, alarms, and warnings. But:
 - Ear plugs don't block out all sound—you should still be able to hear loud voices or warning noises.
 - Better methods of communication and warning can be used on the site, like louder signals or flashing lights.
 - Some new hearing protectors contain a microphone. It reduces loud noises but lets normal voices and warning sounds through.

CAL/OSHA REGULATIONS

Explain: Most of the safety measures we've talked about are required by Cal/OSHA. We have to take these precautions—it's the law. I have a Checklist of the Cal/OSHA regulations on noise. If you'd like to know more, see me after the meeting.

COMPANY RULES

(Only if applicable.) Besides the Cal/OSHA regulations, we have some additional company rules about noise.

Discuss company rules: _____



COMMENTS FROM THE CREW

Ask: Do you have any other concerns about noise? Do you see any problems on our job? *(Let the steward answer first, if there is one.)*

What about other jobs you've worked on? Have you had any experience with noise that might help us work safer on this job?

GENERAL SAFETY DISCUSSION

This is a time to discuss all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during, and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any hazards from other crews? *Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.*

Do we have any old business? *Discuss past issues/problems. Report progress of investigations and action taken.*

Any new business? Any accidents/near misses/complaints? *Discuss accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.*

Please remember, we want to hear from you about *any* health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

To complete the training session:

- Circulate Sign-Off Form.*
- Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.*
- Refer action items for follow-up. (Use the sample **Hazard Report Form** in the Reference Section of this binder, or your company's own form.)*

