

Noise

GENERAL DISCUSSION

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.

0. Do you ask people to speak louder so you can hear?
0. 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. 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 OSHA regulations say about that?

- 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 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.
- Train workers on:
 - The hazards of noise
 - Ways to prevent hearing loss
 - How to wear ear protectors, change them, and clean them (if applicable).
- Use effective hearing protection (like ear plugs or ear muffs) when needed.

8. When do you need to use hearing protection?

- You need it whenever noise levels are above the 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. 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 sounds. 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.

OSHA Regulations

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

Company Rules

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

Discuss company rules

Comments from the Crew

Ask the following: Do you have any other concerns about noise? Do you see any problems on our job? 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 REVIEW

This is a time to review 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 safety hazards from any 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 other safety business? Discuss any past issues or problems. Report any progress of investigations and action taken.

Have there been any accidents, near misses or complaints? Discuss any 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.

ENDING THE MEETING

Circulate Sign-Off Form.

Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.

Refer action items for follow-up.

Do you have any Safety Recommendations?

Do you have any Job Specific Topics you would like us to discuss?

Comments

SAFETY TALKS REVIEW

Hazard Identification, Reduction, and Worker Training

- The company has a written Safety and Health Program that meets all OSHA requirements. It includes identification of noise hazards on the site, regular inspections, accident investigation, and correction of hazardous conditions.
- Operations or equipment that are likely to produce a noise hazard have been identified.

- Workers have been informed of the results of noise monitoring performed on themselves, in their work area, and/or for their trade.
- Exposure has been reduced as much as possible by providing quieter equipment, modifying processes, installing sound barriers, or rotating employees.
- Workers have been trained about the hazards of noise exposure and the means they can take to prevent hearing loss.

Ear Protection

- If employees may be exposed to noise in excess of the OSHA permissible exposure limit (PEL) of 90 dB, appropriate ear protection is provided and workers are required to use it.
- The ear protection provided (ear plugs, ear muffs, etc.) is effective. It is sufficient to reduce noise exposure to a level below the PEL.
- If disposable ear plugs are used, a sufficient supply is kept on site, and workers are instructed to change them when they become dirty.
- Ear protection devices fit the worker and are reasonably comfortable.