



047: Injury Prevention–Ears

Why this is important

Hearing loss is a major preventable health problem.

Damaged hearing reduces your ability to communicate on the job, and it results in social and marital problems.

There is no sense in leaving yourself open to a personal loss.

False assumptions

Many of us assume that wearing foam ear plugs when the sign tells us to “wear hearing protection” is all we need to do to protect our ears. This isn’t true. Ear plugs are just one form of ear protection, and areas with signs requiring hearing protection are just one situation where you should wear ear protection.

Many of us assume hearing protection and ear protection are the same. This isn’t true. Ear protection is more inclusive than hearing protection, but ear protection equipment doesn’t necessarily provide hearing protection and vice-versa.

Many of us assume hearing loss is a natural result of aging. This isn’t particularly true. Hearing loss due to excessive noise is preventable.

Many of us assume we can always get a hearing aid, so hearing loss isn’t important. This isn’t true. Hearing aids do not provide the same quality of hearing that undamaged ears do.

Many of us assume that if we have passed a hearing test we don’t need to worry about our hearing. This isn’t true. Hearing tests don’t catch damage until it has happened, and standard hearing tests are not comprehensive enough to catch all damage that does occur.

Hearing protection

Wear hearing protection whenever you must raise your voice to carry on a normal conversation.

Wear hearing protection whenever you are around machinery that could start without notice and alarm systems that are likely to go off,

You should wear hearing protection whenever the noise levels exceed OSHA limits on or off the job. Damage can occur even when you are having fun.

Wear hearing protection any time you operate a firearm.

Personal hearing protection includes rollable foam plugs, molded plugs, over the ear muffs, or other devices.

Do not wear ear plugs if you are at risk for an arc blast. The concussion could drive those plugs into your ears and render you permanently deaf.

Environmental hearing protection includes noise shields, soundproofing, restricted access, and closed doors. If you find any of this hearing protection damaged or not functioning properly, report that to your foreman.

Noise isn’t the only thing that can damage the inner ear.

Be careful when blowing your nose. In addition to damaging your inner ear, excess pressure can rupture your nasal membranes. There isn’t much between them and your brain.

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Take a walk and look for high noise areas on this jobsite. Note what kinds of hearing protection would apply to those areas, and ask crew members to tell you what they think would apply.

What this Safety Talk covers:

False assumptions about ear protection and cautions to take.

Discussion notes :

