Noise Induced Hearing Loss

Workers exposed to high noise levels for extended periods of time, day in and day out, often experience permanent hearing loss. Unfortunately, their hearing will never return to normal. Warning signs of noise induced hearing loss include trouble hearing someone's speech when just a few feet away, ringing in the ears (a condition known as tinnitus), or difficulty understanding speech.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Occupational Noise Exposure Standard 1910.95, noise levels exceeding a time-weighted average of 85 decibels over an eight-hour period require the employer to implement a hearing conservation program. If noise levels exceed a time weighted average of 90 decibels over an eight-hour shift, employees will be required to wear hearing protection.
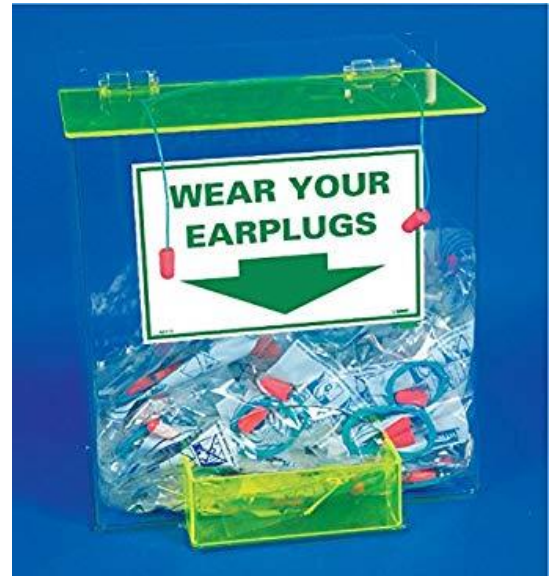
Many types of tools and equipment expose workers to high noise levels. Consider the following:

- Front-End Loader – 85-90 decibels
- Lawn Mower – 60-95 decibels
- Hand grinders – 100-105 decibels
- Chain Saw – 110 decibels

Additional high noise activities may include using compressed air to clean and working around ventilation fans, air compressors, locomotives and truck receiving areas.

There is a generally accepted rule of thumb used to identify when hearing protection should be worn. This rule states that ***if a person is having trouble understanding or hearing a normal tone of voice at a distance of approximately three feet***, hearing protection should be worn. Keep this in mind when using power tools, working around loud equipment, using compressed air, or engaging in other activities that generate significant noise. Your employer may also post signs in the work environment to communicate hearing protection requirements.

Date Presented: _____

Name of Presenter: _____

Acknowledgement:

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Group Discussion Notes/Comments:

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