

Location: _____ Instructor: _____ Date/Time: _____

TOPIC C014: HEARING PROTECTION (A)

Introduction: Most of us take our hearing for granted. Our amazingly sensitive ears can distinguish 400,000 different sounds and can detect sounds so quiet that they cause the eardrum to vibrate less than 1/80,000,000th of an inch. However, that remarkable sensitivity doesn't have a lifetime guarantee; in order to maintain your hearing, it must be protected.

The amount of noise you can withstand without damage to hearing depends on factors such as length of exposure, frequency, decibel levels and type of noise. Remember that hearing protectors control noise, they don't eliminate it; they're effective only if you wear them the entire time you're exposed to hazardous noise.

Know Your Hazards: Noise-induced hearing loss is the occupational issue for us. People differ in their sensitivity to noise, however, and there's no way to determine whose most at risk. Factors such as noise level, frequency and length of exposure all play a role in determining whether noise is harmful. However, you should consider your hearing at risk if the surrounding noise affects you in one of the following ways:

- You have to shout above noise to make yourself heard
- You have ringing in the ears for several hours after exposure to noise
- You have difficulty hearing normal sounds for several hours after exposure to noise

OSHA has established decibel levels after which noise is believed to be hazardous and has established rules based on two decibel-level thresholds: 85 dBA and 90 dBA. OSHA requires companies to have a hearing conservation program for workers exposed to 85 dBA in a time-weighted average (or TWA) of 8 hours.

Hazard Mitigation: Hearing conservation programs reduce or eliminate hearing loss due to noise at work. To achieve the program must: monitor noise; test the hearing of workers; protect workers from loud noises through hearing protection; engineering changes to the workplace, and (where feasible) make process changes (work practices).

OSHA regulations require companies to train employees on: the effects of noise on hearing, the purpose of hearing protection (including the advantages or disadvantages of various types), as well as the selection, fitting, use and care of hearing protection, the purpose of hearing testing and an explanation of the test procedures. The testing determines if an employee's hearing is stable or getting worse over time.

Companies must ensure that hearing protection is worn by any employee who is exposed to an 8-hour average of 85 decibels or greater.

Properly fitted earplugs and earmuffs reduce noise levels 15 to 30 decibels. Regulation-grade earplugs and earmuffs are approximately equal in sound reduction, though earplugs are more effective for reducing low-frequency noise and earmuffs for reducing high-frequency noise. Based on the level of noise and its frequency range, both may be required.

Employee Attendance:(Names or signatures of personnel who are attending this meeting)

These guidelines do not supersede local, state or federal regulations, and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.