



TOOLBOX TALK

INDIANA CONSTRUCTORS, INC.

NOISE EXPOSURE AND HEARING PROTECTION

In the United States, hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition after high blood pressure and arthritis. Short-term exposure to loud noise can cause a temporary change in a person's hearing (ears may feel stuffed up) or a ringing in your ears (tinnitus). These short-term problems may go away within a few minutes or hours after leaving the noise. But repeated exposures to loud noise can lead to permanent ringing in the ears or hearing loss. For the construction industry, OSHA tells us our noise exposure cannot exceed an average of 90 decibels (dba) over an eight-hour period (OSHA 1926.52).

COMMON CAUSES OF NOISE IN CONSTRUCTION

- Heavy equipment like milling machines and pavers
- Excavators and dozers
- Concrete saws
- Chipping hammers
- Air hammers
- Hydraulic hammers

SIGNS OF NOISE OVEREXPOSURE

- A person must raise their voice to be heard by another person three feet away – noise is about 85 decibels (dBA).
- A person must shout to be heard by another person three feet away – noise is about 95 decibels (dBA).
- A person hears ringing or humming in their ears at the end of the workday.
- A person notices temporary hearing loss at any point when leaving work.

CHOOSING THE CORRECT HEARING PROTECTION

Hearing protection is labeled with a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR). When worn correctly, the NRR tell us the amount of noise or sound reduction we can expect when wearing hearing protection. Due to changing factors such as size, worn correctly, etc., OSHA suggests reducing the NRR by 50% for a true noise reduction in the field. If you combine two types of hearing protection together, ear plugs with earmuffs, you only add an NRR of five to the higher NRR form of hearing protection.

TYPES OF HEARING PROTECTION

- Earplugs – when worn correctly can give you the highest NRR.
- Earmuffs – form air-tight seal over the ear, NRR up to 30 dB; less effective when using eyewear.
- Canal Caps – lower NRR; use pressure from a headband to hold the earplugs in place.

IMPORTANT FACTS TO REMEMBER

- Repeated exposure to high levels of noise over long periods of time will reduce your ability to hear.
- You may not notice a loss of hearing until a substantial loss has occurred.
- Hearing loss is typically gradual but is irreversible.



Company Name: _____

Project #/Name: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Meeting Location: _____

Person Conducting Meeting: _____

Items Discussed

Problem Areas or Concerns

Attendees

_____	_____
_____	_____
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Comments
