

noise! Noise! NOISE!!!



OSHA says that if a noise on a jobsite is more than 85 decibels, an employee must be provided personal protective equipment that will protect his hearing.

Earplugs or ear muffs are the standard pieces of personal protective equipment that are used to achieve this protection. Have you ever been issued earplugs while performing a job function that is noisy? Did you wear them? Why not?

Well, say some people, earplugs give me a headache. Or, maybe they want to chat with a co-worker and can't hear what the other guy is saying if they're wearing earplugs. Or, quite often a worker will say that if they wear earplugs, they can't hear the back-up alarms on the construction equipment. Baloney!

Were these comments valid? Do they make sense? Would you use any of these excuses "not to wear" earplugs that were provided you by your employer to protect your valuable hearing?

What did you say? What, say again. I can't hear you. Speak slower. Speak louder. Huh?

If you find yourself saying any of these things, maybe (just maybe) you have a hearing impairment. "Not me, buddy, I can hear a butterfly flying a mile away." Really?

Here's the point we're trying to make. A construction site is a noisy environment. Dozens of pieces of equipment moving soil, lifting material, pouring sand and gravel, generators providing power, jack hammers breaking up concrete, back-up alarms, nearby vehicular traffic on the interstate, etc.

And all of this noise is entering your hearing system, all day long, until it reaches the point where you start to ignore the clatter, clapping, hissing, honking, tapping, pounding, drilling, hammering, and maybe even a boom-box or two.

From a hearing standpoint, the single most important piece of personal protective equipment that is made available to you is the "earplug." It can, and will, provide noise abatement so that your hearing senses are not damaged by ongoing exposure to jobsite noise.

So why don't' you use the earplugs that are given you? Did you know that:

- A concrete truck that is idling nearby produces almost a 100 decibels.
- A jackhammer over 120 decibels.
- A hoe ram over 110 decibels.
- A boom-box 130 decibels.
- A skill-saw 125 decibels.

When the decibel level exceeds the acceptable level of 85, your hearing is damaged. Continuous exposure eventually results in hearing impairment, sometimes irreversible.

Construction is noisy. Your hearing is precious. Wear earplugs when provided, and as directed by your employer.

Have you ever been on a "quiet" construction site? Of course you haven't, so why do we ask this stupid question?

We ask the question because despite the countless noises on most sites, rarely do workers wear earplugs or ear muffs.

Maybe it's because we've grown use to it, so we accept it as a way of life. But do you know what happens to you after four or five years of this "noisy" jobsite condition? We start to have minor ear impairments, then major ear impairments, and still later possible loss of hearing in one of both ears. SAD!

What's the noisiest thing on your jobsite? Maybe the superintendent? Just kidding. Well, what about that hoe-ram you were standing next to last week, talking to your buddy. Or should we say, screaming to your buddy.

Did you notice that painter on the second floor, painting and painting, alongside a trim contractor using a skill saw, hour after hour? And did you notice that the painter had his boom box turned up full volume?

Noise emanates from every direction on a construction jobsite. Cranes, derricks, back-hoes, front-end loaders, excavators, pans, compaction devices, blasting, jack-hammering, hoe-ramming, drilling, sawing, air exchange equipment, you name it.

So where are your earplugs . . . or ear muffs? Did you hear me, your earplugs, or your ear muffs!!!!

Loss of hearing is a gradual thing, but once it starts downhill, there's no stopping it. Protect your hearing, be nice to yourself, and continue to hear the wonderful sounds of nature, the rolling surf, the waterfalls, the sound of a robin in spring.