

MCLB ALBANY SAFETYGRAM

HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Hearing conservation is an important aspect of the overall safety and health program. Workplace noise can cause hearing loss, create physical and psychological stress, and contribute to mishaps by making it difficult to communicate. An estimated 30 million employees in the United States are exposed to hazardous noise. Listed below are several ways to control and reduce worker exposure to noise at work using the hierarchy of controls (Engineering, Administrative, and Personal Protective Equipment).

1. Engineered noise controls include:

- Choosing low-noise tools and machinery.
- Maintaining and lubricating machinery and equipment (e.g., oil bearings).
- Placing a barrier between the noise source and employee (e.g., sound walls or curtains).
- Enclosing or isolating the noise source.

2. Administrative controls may include:

- Plan work areas so that noisy operations are located away from personnel not directly involved.
- Schedule noisy operations before or after hours to minimize exposure to other personnel.
- Use quiet equipment such as silenced compressors.
- Maintain a *noise perimeter zone* where only designated workers are allowed to enter.
- Post signs indicating that hearing protection must be worn around noisy tools and equipment.
- Provide information on noise levels, noise controls, and the selection, care, and use of personal hearing protectors for new employees and contractors.
- Rotate workers through noisy operations or areas to minimize exposure times.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (least preferred method) include:

Earmuffs

Features:

- Easy to use and wear.
- Fit most people.
- Easy to keep clean.
- May be preferable in certain environments.
- Some are specially designed with electronic components that help users communicate or block impulsive noises.

Concerns:

- Can be hot and heavy.
- May interfere with other protective gear or sideburns.



Canal caps

Features:

- Fits many different ear canals.
- On a band, can be worn under chin, over head or behind neck.
- Ideal for in and out of noise.
- Can be put on and taken off quickly.

Concerns:

- Not as comfortable.
- Not as much protection as others.



Reusable earplugs

Features:

- Fits many different ear canals.
- Many have flanges and handles.
- Come in different sizes.
- Come with cords, convenient to carry.
- Re-useable. Washable.
- In dusty environment, don't need to roll.

Concerns:

- Many have flanges and handles.
- Come in different sizes.



Roll down foam

Features:

- Fits many different ear canals.
- Provides good protection for most noise situations.
- Convenient.
- Maintenance free
- Disposable.

Concerns:

- Takes practice to insert.
- Must be inserted properly to get the highest possible protection.



Visit www.osha.gov/SLTC/noisehearingconservation/index.html for more information on the Hearing Conservation Program



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