



SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK

FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



Company _____ Date _____

To encourage all of us to promote safety on a continuing basis, the Builders Exchange publishes a safety tip in each issue of the weekly **Bulletin**.
 The superintendent/foreman of each job should use this safety tip in a short safety meeting Monday morning.
 We suggest that this 5-to-10 minute meeting be just before lunch or perhaps right after the morning break.
 You can then emphasize the SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK all week long.

Hearing Safety

Week Ending 03/08/19

In today's workforce, approximately 30 million people are exposed to hazardous noise. Thousands of workers every year suffer from preventable hearing loss due to high workplace noise levels. Short term exposure to loud noises can cause a temporary change in hearing or a ringing in the ears (tinnitus). Short-term hearing problems may go away in time, however, repeated exposures to loud noise can lead to permanent tinnitus and/or hearing loss.

Loud noises in the workplace can also cause:

- reduced productivity
- inability to concentrate or communicate effectively
- physical and psychological stress
- increased chance of injury

To prevent these problems, employers should properly protect their employees and implement a hearing loss prevention program. This type of program, if implemented successfully, benefits the company by reducing medical expenses, worker compensation costs and minimizes or eliminates the long term effects of hearing loss.

Use these steps to create a successful hearing loss prevention program:

- 1) Conduct a Hearing Loss Prevention Program Audit** - Before you make any changes to your existing program, you should first conduct an audit. This will help identify what is currently in place, what is working and what needs to be changed. It is often a good idea to bring in an expert to conduct the audit, as they provide additional insights and can help identify if your program is in compliance with OSHA and other regulations.
- 2) Monitor Noise Exposure** - Noise levels should be monitored regularly to see where there may be dangers in your workplace. It is important to accurately identify employees exposed to noise at or above 85 decibels averaged over 8 working hours. Employers must monitor employees who meet this criteria and the measurement must include all continuous, intermittent and impulsive noise within an 80 decibel to 130 decibel range.
- 3) Implement Engineering and Administrative Controls** - Where possible you should use engineering and administrative controls to ensure that workers are not exposed to noise at or above 85 dBA as an 8-hour TWA. Engineering controls include redesigning equipment to eliminate noise sources and constructing barriers that prevent noise from reaching a worker. If you are unable to make these changes, administrative

controls, such as scheduling changes and quit break areas, are an alternative option.

4) Perform Audiometric Evaluation - Audiometric evaluation is crucial to the success of the hearing loss prevention program, since it is the only way to determine whether occupational hearing loss is being prevented. Audiometric testing is performed by a licensed or certified audiologist or other physician, and monitors employee's hearing over time. Important elements of the program include baseline audiograms, annual audiograms, training and follow up procedures. Management must allocate sufficient time and resources to the audiometric program to allow accurate testing, otherwise, the resulting audiograms will be useless.

5) Provide Proper Hearing Protection - When employees are exposed to sound levels at or exceeding the action level (85 dBA TWA), hearing protection devices such as earplugs or earmuffs must be made available. It is key to ensure that the devices fit properly, as the effectiveness is greatly reduced if worn incorrectly. Hearing protection should be selected based on the environment of your facility, the fit and comfort level for each employee and offer the best level of protection.

6) Educate and Motivate Employees - It is important to clearly mark, with visible warning signs, any areas where noise exposure equals or exceeds 85 dBA. This will help employees identify when additional protection is needed and shows you are taking the proper steps to protect them. Additionally, training should be conducted on a regular basis. This consists of educating employees on the effects of noise, the selection, fit and care of hearing protectors and the purpose of audiometric testing.

7) Keep Proper Records - Hearing loss prevention program records should include documentation of all items for each element of the program. Noise exposure records should be maintained for at least two years and audiometric test records should be maintained for at least the duration of employment. According to OSHA, audiometric test records must include the employee's name, job classification, date, examiner's name, date of the last calibration, measurements of the background sounds pressure levels in audiometric test rooms, and employee's most recent noise exposure measurement.

8) Evaluate the Program - Like other safety programs, hearing loss prevention programs require periodic evaluation to assure their effectiveness. Review with your management team and employees to see what is working and what is not and make changes where needed.

Special Topics for this Job: _____

MSDS # _____ Reviewed – Title: _____
 Present at Meeting:

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Note: These SAFETY TIPS OF THE WEEK are to help members provide a safe workplace and to instruct employees in ways to prevent accidents. Ensure you record the names of those who attend your safety meetings, and file this form with your permanent accident prevention records.