



TAILGATE SAFETY

WHAT DID YOU SAY???

Most people, especially when they are young, take their good hearing for granted. They know that a lot of older people are hard of hearing and many wear hearing aids. It is assumed that most hearing loss is the unavoidable result of getting old. Most hearing loss in older people is NOT due to aging, but to exposure to noise over a lifetime. These include traffic noises, airplanes, machinery, stereos, televisions, etc. People living in primitive parts of the world, where they don't have all these everyday noises of modern society, have little or no hearing loss as they grow older.

As for construction work, the sources of loud noises are many and varied and include: Power saws of various types, hammers, cement trucks and cement mixers, power and powder actuated hand tools, stapling guns, nail guns, jack hammers and other power tools, etc.

The noise level on job sites can range anywhere from acceptable to "protection required". OSHA places allowable limits on noise exposure. When noise levels exceed these limits, steps must be taken to eliminate, reduce, or relocate the noise source. If this is impossible, then appropriate hearing protection must be used.

The two main damaging factors of sound are loudness and time of exposure. For example, you must not exceed 90 decibels for 8 hours, 100 decibels for 2 hours, or 110 decibels for ½ hour. Noise — its loudness, which is the amount of pressure that it exerts on a surface — is measured in decibels. A sound of 90 decibels is 10 times stronger than a sound of 80, decibels, thus a sound of 100 decibels is 100 times stronger than a sound of 80 decibels.

Since most construction sites do not monitor noise levels, the decision to use protection will probably be determined on a case-by-case basis. Most shop tools generate about 90 decibels, a chain saw or jack hammer 110 to 120 decibels, bulldozer 105 decibels, hand drill 98 decibels, etc.

You should be using hearing protection if you must shout to be heard above surrounding noise, if your ears are ringing or hearing is muffled by quitting time, or if you feel any pain or discomfort due to noise levels.

All hearing protection has a NRR or Noise Reduction Rating which is a number (15, 20, 25, etc.). This number represents the amount the noise is reduced by wearing the protection (theoretically). For example, if a jack hammer is 100 decibels and you wear hearing protection with a NRR of 25, the decibels are reduced to 75.

Hearing protection doesn't work unless it is worn. It must be used properly, fit the user, and be chosen based on the type and level of noise.

Training Tips: a) Have different types of hearing protection (ear muffs, ear plugs, etc.) and let employees know when to wear what types. b) Ask for a volunteer to show the group how to insert ear plugs, then show them how the right way. c) Discuss things people like to listen to and then have them imagine not being able to hear, ask them if hearing loss has affected one of their loved ones.



North Coast Builders Exchange ~Tailgate Topics
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