

▶ HEARING PROTECTION

Things to Do Before Training

- ▶ Know which types of hearing protection are supplied by the company or brought to the job site by workers.
- ▶ Know whether there are any company rules about wearing hearing protection for specific tasks.
- ▶ In the index of the *Cal/OSHA Pocket Guide for the Construction Industry*, look up **Hearing Protection** and read the pages listed.

Introduction

Over time, exposure to loud noise decreases our ability to hear. Older workers can start to feel lonely and frustrated as hearing loss over the years makes it tough to communicate with coworkers, family, and friends.

We should always reduce noise as much as possible by choosing quieter equipment, using sound barriers, or limiting time in noisy areas. But when noise levels are still high, **hearing protection** – plugs or muffs – must be worn.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ▶ Do you know any construction workers with hearing loss? How does this affect their lives?
- ▶ What are the types of hearing protection we can use on this job?
- ▶ What are the noisy tasks and equipment on this job site where you should wear hearing protection?
- ▶ Can you think of ways we can improve our use of hearing protection?

SAFETY  BREAK

ACTIONS TO TAKE

- ▶ Check to see whether all crew members who may be overexposed to noise have hearing protection on hand and use it properly.
- ▶ If suitable hearing protection is not available for everyone, get the company to order and/or distribute what is needed.

Key Points to Keep in Mind

- If noise causes you to yell to communicate, you should be using hearing protection.
- If you ever go home hearing a ringing or whooshing noise that goes away after an hour or two, this is a sign that you've been overexposed.
- Hearing loss is **permanent and 100% preventable**.
- Overexposure to noise can occur quickly** from short exposure to very loud noise (for example, 15 minutes with a gas-powered quick-cut saw will lead to overexposure for that day).
- Most power tools and equipment used in construction operate over 85 decibels (dBA).
- Using hearing protection consistently can slow down or stop hearing loss.
- The company should offer **several types and sizes** of hearing protectors so employees can use what fits and works best.
- A competent person should help employees choose and fit** hearing protectors and train them on appropriate use.

Ear Muffs

- Use for intermittent noise; easy to take on and off.
- Replace cushions every year to ensure protection.
- Be sure eyeglasses or respirators don't prevent a good seal.
- Keep tension in the headband tight enough to seal well without being uncomfortable.



Ear Plugs

- Choose a size that fits comfortably.
- Read instructions on proper insertion and train employees.
- Be sure hands are clean when inserting.
- Use disposables only once.

