



SMO 10-0204

HEAR TODAY – GONE TOMORROW

By SeaBright Insurance Loss Control

If noise reduction cannot be achieved through engineering methods, then providing hearing protection devices becomes the critical first step in protecting workers from harmful noise levels. It is important to understand how to properly use and choose a protection device. Devices are assigned a noise reduction rating and some studies have revealed that half of the rating efficiency is lost due to improper fitting or misuse. The three most common types of protection are ear plugs, ear muffs, and canal caps.

Ear plugs can be custom-molded or pre-molded. Molded plugs are reusable and should be kept clean and stored in a carry case. Disposable ear plugs of the formable type are most commonly found in construction settings. Roll the cylindrical plug between your thumb and index finger to reduce the diameter of the plug. Make your ear canal accessible by reaching over the top of your head with your other hand and pull your ear outward. Insert the plug into your ear and hold it gently in place with your fingertip until expansion is complete. Dispose of the plug after usage.

Ear muffs usually consist of an adjustable spring-loaded headband and two cushioned ear cups. The cushioned seal should cover the ear and make complete contact with your head. If eye glasses are being worn, then the frame of the glasses should be cushioned or be thin enough so as not to disrupt the seal between the cushion and your head. A heavy beard or sideburns can also disrupt the seal. Ear muffs are an alternative for those who cannot wear ear plugs. Replace any cushioned seals that have become hardened or damaged. Clean and store according to the manufacturer's instructions.



Canal caps are another alternative to earplugs and frequently come attached to a flexible headband. Canal caps are normally made of a rubber like material and can be worn over the head, behind the head, or under the chin. The caps have arrows to identify the top of the cap and forward direction. Place the headband in the desired position and adjust the cap so that the arrow is on top pointing forward when set into your ear canal. Grasp the cap with your thumb and index finger. Gently work the cap into your ear canal until sealed. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper cleaning and storage.¹

Proper usage and comfortableness are necessary for adequate hearing protection. Noise does not toughen your ears, it destroys them! Hearing loss from noise is painless, progressive, permanent, and **PREVENTABLE**. Use hearing protection when indicated. Know how to properly fit and maintain your protective device.

For additional detailed information, the NIOSH site <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/solutions/hcToolbox.html> includes the NIOSH Noise Meter with links to the Hearing Conservation Toolbox and other resources. There you will also find a link to brochures each published for specific industries by the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine, intended for use by supervisors and safety professionals: <http://depts.washington.edu/ocnoise/booklets.html>

¹ photo from KellerOnline© (www.kelleronline.com).

SAFETY MEETING AGENDA



DEPARTMENT/JOB SITE: _____ MEETING DATE: _____

1. **Open Meeting & Present safety topic:** _____
2. Read minutes from previous meeting.
3. **Persons present:**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. **Old Business** – Status of previous recommendations. Discuss pending old business if any.

5. **Accidents** – Discuss accidents and near misses that have occurred since the last meeting. Brief summary of accidents to date by number and type. Note any trends. Discuss corrective action taken, or needed. Concentrate on accident causes to make everyone more aware.

6. **Inspection Reports** – Report on findings and recommendations of any inspection reports made since last meeting.

7. **New Business** – Solicit employee suggestions. Discuss new procedures, changes to company safety policy, etc.

TIME MEETING STARTED: _____ TIME FINISHED: _____

MEETING CHAIRED BY: _____ TITLE: _____