

Safety Meeting
I Can't Hear You



Company: _____ Presenter: _____ Date: _____

How many times have you had to say, "I can't hear you!"? Your buddy yells something, but there is so much noise you can't hear what's being said. What you do now to protect your hearing could make a great deal of difference to you as you grow older, so listen carefully.

Webster's Dictionary defines noise as any loud, discordant, or disagreeable sound or sounds. Noise can affect you psychologically by startling you, annoying you, and disrupting your concentration. Noise can also affect you physiologically by causing stress, a gradual loss of hearing, and even pain or nausea when the exposure is severe. As a consequence, noise interferes with your performance and safety.

How can you tell if the noise level is dangerous? If it is necessary for you to speak in a very loud voice or shout in someone's ear in order to be understood, it is likely that the noise exposure limit is being exceeded. If you have ringing noises in your ears or in your head at the end of the workday, you are being exposed to too much noise. If speech or music sounds muffled to you after you leave work, there is no doubt that you are being exposed to noise levels that may eventually cause a partial loss of hearing. Complete and permanent hearing loss is a very real danger. In most cases, hearing loss is so gradual, that by the time you realize you can't hear as well as you used to, the damage has been done and it cannot be reversed.

Hearing protection is particularly important when noise exposure cannot be adequately controlled by environmental or engineering means. Ear protectors reduce noise levels at the inner ear. The protection you choose may be either earplugs or earmuffs. Employees seem to resist wearing hearing protection more than any other type of personal protective equipment. One of the most common reasons given is that they don't think protection is necessary. There are many instances when hearing protection really is necessary. Another common reason is discomfort. Using the right type of plug or muff that has been properly fitted should eliminate any discomfort.

If you consider the noise level on your project to be excessive, talk to your supervisor. Noise intensity should be monitored regularly and can be checked by using a sound level meter.

SAFETY REMINDER: Additional information can be found in 29 CFR 1926.52 "Occupational Noise Exposure."

Employee Signatures
