Noise and hearing toolbox talk

Health · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

Breakers, disc cutters, compactors, concrete vibrators, nail guns and generators are loud enough to damage hearing. Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and creeps up without pain, so most people notice only when it is too late. South Africa's Noise Exposure Regulations, 2024 require noisy areas and machines to be marked as noise zones where hearing protection must be worn.

SAY THIS

Hearing loss does not come back

Loud noise damages tiny hair cells deep inside your ear. Once they are gone, they do not grow back, and no doctor or hearing aid can make your hearing normal again. It happens slowly, a little bit every loud day, so you do not notice until you struggle to follow a conversation in a busy place or your family complains the TV is too loud.

Warning signs

If you have to shout to be heard by someone standing close to you, the noise is probably loud enough to harm you. Ringing or buzzing in your ears after work, or sounds seeming muffled on the way home, are signs your ears have taken damage that day. Do not ignore them.

Noise zones

The law says areas and machines at or above the legal noise limit must be clearly marked as noise zones. Inside a noise zone, everyone wears hearing protection, including you if you are only walking through or talking to the operator. On our site today the noise zones are where the breaker, the cut-off saw and the compactor are working.

Wear them properly

Foam plugs only work if they go deep enough. Roll the plug thin, pull your ear up and back with the other hand, push the plug in and hold it while it expands. If half of it sticks out, it is doing very little. Ear muffs must seal all round the ear; hair, a beanie or safety glasses arms under the cushions let noise in. Taking protection off for even a few minutes in a loud area wipes out much of its benefit.

Look after the equipment

Keep reusable plugs and muffs clean and in their container, not loose in your pocket with sand and cement. Put plugs in with clean hands. Replace foam plugs when they are dirty, and tell the supervisor if muff cushions are cracked or the headband is loose. Phones with earphones are not hearing protection, and loud music on top of site noise adds to the damage.

Make less noise

The best protection is less noise in the first place. Switch off machines that are not being used. Park the generator and compressor away from where people work. Keep tools maintained, because worn bearings and loose guards get louder. Tell the supervisor about a machine that is louder than it should be.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- ☐ Which machines on site today are loud enough that you must shout to be heard?
- ☐ Are those areas and machines marked as noise zones with signs?
- ☐ Is there a supply of ear plugs and working ear muffs where people can reach them?
- ☐ Can the generator or compressor be moved further from where people are working?
- ☐ Is anyone working near a noisy job without protection, such as labourers, other trades or visitors?

ASK THE CREW

- ? Have you ever left work with ringing ears? What were you doing that day?
- ? Show me how you put your ear plugs in. Can someone check how deep they are?
- ? What makes it hard to keep hearing protection on all the time?
- ? Which machine on this site do you think is the loudest, and could we do anything to make it quieter?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Ear plugs (foam or reusable) fitted properly · Ear muffs, including helmet-mounted muffs for use with a hard hat

THE LAW

Noise Exposure Regulations, 2024, regulation 11: Noise zone; Noise Exposure Regulations, 2024, regulation 12: Hearing protective devices; Noise Exposure Regulations, 2024, regulation 5: Duties of persons who may be exposed to noise. What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/noise-and-hearing/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Noise and hearing protection

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	COMPANY OR TRADE	SIGNATURE
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			

Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.