

2002 ACOEM Labor Day CheckList

Tips for Protecting Hearing in the Workplace

The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) presents the 2002 Labor Day CheckList dealing with noise and hearing conservation. Hearing loss affects more than 28 million Americans and the number is rising. This loss is cumulative and can never be regained. Take a few minutes to review some preventive steps for hearing protection that both employers and employees can take in today's work environments.

Action Areas	Employers	Employees
GENERAL WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT		
<p>Inspections</p> <p><i>Identifying potential noise hazards and controlling/reducing noise at its source is the most effective way to protecting worker hearing.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Perform regular safety inspections and assess hearing hazards, particularly in manufacturing/industrial environments using monitoring devices such as sound meters and dosimeters.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Report noisy equipment, activities, and work areas.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Participate in noise dosimetry testing.</p>
<p>Noise Levels</p> <p><i>The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that employers monitor noise exposure levels and identify employees who are exposed to noise at or above 85 decibels (dB) averaged over 8 working hours. Continued exposure above 85 dBA can cause hearing damage.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Use engineering and/or administrative controls to reduce noise levels.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor employee hearing levels and notify them of the results of exposure monitoring (method of notification is left to the discretion of the employers).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a quiet environment for breaks and lunch.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Measure noise levels and control excessive noise. Make sure you are in compliance with OSHA regulations.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Support the use of engineering controls that decrease noise levels.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Observe monitoring procedures and make sure you are notified of the results.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get plenty of quiet time, especially between noise exposures.</p>
<p>Hearing Protection Devices (HPDs)</p> <p><i>HPDs must be available to all workers exposed to 8-hour TWA noise levels of 85 dB or above.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate HPDs to protect workers from hazardous noise levels.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure all hearing protection devices conform to OSHA standards and properly fit the employee.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Wear the correct ear/hearing protection assigned to you and your work task.</p>
<p>Audiometric Testing Programs</p> <p><i>OSHA requires employers to establish and maintain an audiometric testing program, the elements of which include baseline audiograms, annual audiograms, training, and follow-up procedures. Testing must be made available at no cost to all employees exposed to an action level of 85 dB or above, measured as an 8-hour TWA.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the effectiveness of your hearing conservation program.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Update your program on a constant basis or at least annually. Baseline audiometric testing should be done at the onset of a program with annual follow-up to measure changes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consider offering hearing tests to those employees who are not exposed to hazardous noise on the job.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain records of noise-exposure levels, employees' hearing tests, background noise of audiometric testing room, employee education, and program evaluation.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Take part in the programs offered at your facility.</p>

EDUCATION		
Intervention/ Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasize the importance of wearing protective hearing equipment and provide employees with proper training. <input type="checkbox"/> Include information regarding hearing health in employee wellness education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to properly use protective hearing equipment. <input type="checkbox"/> Read the information provided by your employer and apply it.
Hearing Exams	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider offering hearing exams as part of the health insurance program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Have regular hearing examinations.
Visual Reminders	<input type="checkbox"/> Place educational posters/information in key areas throughout your facility to remind workers about using HPDs and educate them on noise hazards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Take note of educational/informative materials your employer is providing.
LIFESTYLE		
Diet/Exercise/Stress/ Smoking <i>A healthy lifestyle – daily exercise, along with a healthy diet and reducing stress – can go a long way in protecting your hearing and treating tinnitus (ringing in the ears).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Offer healthy food options in on-site dining facilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Be proactive and alleviate stressful situations in the workplace. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide exercise opportunities at work (lunch time walking clubs, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Ban smoking in the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/> Choose healthy foods and limit your intake of caffeine. <input type="checkbox"/> Work to reduce stress in your life whenever possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in employee-sponsored health activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Stop smoking/don't start.
Recreational Activities/Home	<input type="checkbox"/> Include information regarding recreational noise in employee education. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate personal hearing protection devices at any employee-sponsored recreational activity that involves loud noises.	<input type="checkbox"/> Turn down the volume or wear hearing protection when involved in certain recreational activities such as attending rock concerts, loud sporting events (car races, motor boating, etc.). Limit your exposure to excessive noise. <input type="checkbox"/> Be a good role model by avoiding excessive noise and using hearing protection as needed – provide an appropriate variety of personal hearing protection devices for the whole family. <input type="checkbox"/> Share information regarding prevention of noise-induced hearing loss with the entire family and teach children about the hazards of excessive noise and how to prevent noise-induced hearing loss.



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