

TOOLBOX TALK

HEARING PROTECTION: EP18

7 Steps to Effective Hearing Protection

1. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

- Identify noise sources in the workplace.
- Apply the hierarchy of controls:
 - » Eliminate or reduce noise where possible. Use engineering controls (e.g., sound dampening).
 - » Rotate staff to limit noise exposure. (Reduce time exposed to noise risk)
 - » PPE should be the last resort.

3. **SELECT THE RIGHT HEARING PROTECTION**

- Match the protection to the environment and comfort needs.
- Must meet EN 352 or SANS 50352 standards.
- Options include:
 - » Earplugs – Foam or reusable.
 - » Earmuffs – Over-the-ear protection.
 - » Custom-molded earplugs – Long-lasting and comfortable.

5. **PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Factor in:

- Dirt and moisture (use washable products in dirty environments).
- Heat (earmuffs may be uncomfortable).
- Ear sensitivity (earmuffs better for infections).

2. **NOISE ASSESSMENT**

- Measure noise levels using a sound level meter.
- Must be done by a qualified occupational hygienist.
- Noise levels should be measured every two years, or when there has been any adjustments to the area which would impact previous sound levels.

4. **ATTENUATION CALCULATION**

- Use the Single Number Rating (SNR) to calculate noise reduction.
- Target is to reduce noise to between 70dB – 80dB.
- If noise exceeds 85dB hearing protection is compulsory.
- Double protection (earplugs + earmuffs) may be needed for very high noise levels.

6. **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Teach:

- Correct insertion and removal of earplugs.
- Cleaning and storage.
- How to check for damage and replace protection.

Must be done annually by a qualified person.

7. **HEALTH SURVEILLANCE**

- Baseline hearing test at the start of employment.
- Annual audiometric tests required.
- Final hearing test upon leaving the company.
- Records must be kept for 20 years.



One size does NOT fit all!

Hearing protection is highly individual, each person's ear canal is unique, and noise levels vary by environment. It's important to conduct fit testing to ensure proper seal and protection.

A properly fitted earplug or earmuff is more effective and comfortable, leading to better compliance and long-term protection!

Need Help?

One of our experts are available to assist with your hearing protection requirements

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