



***CLEVELAND INTEGRITY SERVICES, INC.***

## **Hearing Conservation**

**Goals:**      **This safety session should teach employees to:**

- Understand the hazards of high noise levels.
- Know how to select, use, and maintain hearing protectors.

**Applicable Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.95**

### **1. High Noise Levels Can Damage Hearing and Cause Safety Problems**

Loud noise, especially if it's shrill, can cause:

- Temporary or permanent **hearing loss**
- **Tinnitus**, a constant or periodic ringing or roaring in the ears
- **Inability to hear** signals and safety warnings (interferes with communication)
- **Stress**, poor concentration, headaches, etc. from straining to hear

### **2. OSHA Requires Employers to Protect Employees from High Noise Levels**

- Employers must measure workplace noise levels. If 8-hour time-weighted average exposures are 85 decibels (dB) or more, a Hearing Conservation Plan is needed.
  - A dishwasher is 65 dB; power sander, 85; jackhammer, 110; jet engine, 140.

Employers with Hearing Conservation Plans must:

- Monitor noise levels and report results to employees
- Test employee hearing to set a baseline and identify any losses over time
- Try engineering out workplace noise
- Provide employees still exposed to high noise levels with hearing protection devices and training on how to select, use, and care for them

### **3. Cooperate With Efforts to Reduce Workplace Noise Exposure**

These efforts include:

- Placing noisy machinery or operations in separate areas
- Lubricating and maintaining equipment to eliminate rattles and squeaks
- Replacing worn or loose machine parts
- Mounting machines on rubber to reduce vibration
- Choosing quieter machines when replacements are needed
- Installing sound barriers around noisy equipment
- Using sound-absorbing pads, ceiling materials, etc.
- Administrative controls, such as reducing the time an individual is exposed to high noise levels



## ***CLEVELAND INTEGRITY SERVICES, INC.***

### **4. Hearing Protection Devices Cover or Go Into the Ears to Block Noise**

Never use cotton, stereo headsets, or other makeshift hearing protectors. They don't protect your ears from noise. Use one of the following:

- **Earplugs** are inserted in the ear canal to seal noise out. (Note: Frequently, plugs are inserted ineffectively or incorrectly.) They may be premolded or custom-molded reusables, or one-use or one-week-use disposables.
- **Earmuffs** are the best protectors. They have a headband with cushioned plastic cups that cover each ear. They may feel bulky or uncomfortable in hot weather. In tight quarters, they can be an added problem.
- **Canal caps** cover and seal the ear canal entrance with soft flexible pads on a lightweight headband. Though comfortable, they provide the least protection.
- **Earmuffs** plus earplugs may be needed in some high-noise areas.

### **5. Inspect and Care for Hearing Protection Devices**

- Inspect hearing protectors before each use. Report and don't use:
  - Earmuffs or canal caps that are loose, cracked, or don't seal well
  - Earplugs that are cracked, misshapen, or hard and inflexible
- Wash hands thoroughly before inserting or putting on hearing protectors.
- Clean hearing protection devices regularly, following manufacturers' instructions.
  - Warm, soapy water is often recommended.
  - Don't use alcohol, acetone, or other chemicals.
- Store hearing protection devices where they'll stay clean and dry.
  - Don't squish. Doing so will affect fit.

### **6. Be Aware of and Report Hearing Problems**

- Noise or ringing in the ears
- Trouble hearing voices or high or soft sounds
- Needing TV or radio volume so high that others complain

### **7. Wear Hearing Protection for Off-the-Job Noise Exposure**

- Power tools, chain saws, lawn mowers, garden tractors
- Hunting, shooting
- Motorcycles, snowmobiles, rock concerts, car and motorcycle races

### **Conclusion: Always Use Hearing Protection in High-Noise Situations**

Though they may seem uncomfortable at first, hearing protection devices can help you protect one of your most important senses.