Common Mistakes When Using Hearing Protection Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Improper insertion of earplugs or loose earmuffs can reduce their effectiveness, exposing users to harmful noise.
2. Removing hearing protection, even briefly in loud environments, allows cumulative hearing damage to occur.
3. Using hearing protection with the wrong noise reduction rating (NRR) can either block necessary sounds (e.g., alarms) or fail to prevent hearing loss.
4. Damaged or old earplugs and earmuff cushions don’t seal properly, diminishing protection.
5. Reusing dirty or improperly stored hearing protection can cause ear infections or discomfort.
6. Workers unaware of correct usage techniques may misuse hearing protection, reducing its benefit.

STATS

- The CDC’s 2023 NIOSH Occupational Hearing Loss Report estimated that 40% of workers in high-noise industries used hearing protection incorrectly, contributing to 15% of NIHL cases.
- WorkSafeBC reported in 2022 that 20% of occupational NIHL claims in British Columbia were linked to improper earplug insertion or inconsistent use during noise exposure.
- OSHA’s 2022 data noted that 10% of noise-related violations involved inadequate hearing protection training, with 25% of audited workers using damaged or ill-fitting devices.
- Statistics Canada’s 2021 Canadian Community Health Survey found that 12% of workers in noisy environments (e.g., construction, manufacturing) reported not using hearing protection consistently, citing discomfort or improper fit.
- A 2023 Journal of Occupational Safety study indicated that 30% of construction workers used earplugs with incorrect NRR for their noise environment, reducing protection by up to 50%.
- CCOHS reported in 2023 that workplaces with hands-on hearing protection

training reduced improper use incidents by 22%, per CSA Z94.2 standards.
- A 2024 American Journal of Audiology analysis found that 18% of recreational noise users (e.g., concerts, firearms) experienced hearing damage due to inconsistent or improper earplug use.