OSHA: Hearing Conservation Overview



Key Takeaways:

– Learning how noise impacts hearing and the factors that determine the extent of hearing loss.
– Recognizing noise exposure levels that require hearing protection.
– Understanding how the types of hearing protectors are selected for a job, and their advantages and disadvantages for controlling noise exposure.
– Learning correct use, care, and maintenance practices for hearing protectors.
– Comprehending the requirements of a Hearing Conservation Program.

Course Description

Sometimes people take hearing for granted. Picture yourself unable to hear. Visualize how your life will be changed. It is important to learn about noise hazards and how to protect yourself against noise hazards.

The damage is cumulative and the hearing loss cannot be reversed by medicine or surgery. A hearing aid cannot completely restore hearing either.

Sound, measured in decibels (dBA), ranges in various levels of extremity. Although 140 dBA will cause immediate pain, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that workplaces limit noise exposure to 85 dBA during an 8 hour day. For comparison, this noise level is about little louder than a freight train 100 feet away. However, this threshold goes down exponentially at higher levels. NIOSH recommends a maximum of 15 minutes of exposure to 100 dBA, or the level of noise at a construction site.

Sound damage is serious, which is why OSHA created requirements for general industries forcing companies to create a Hearing Conservation Program when workers are exposed to an average level of 85 dBA during an 8 hour shift. These programs require measuring noise levels, providing free hearing exams and free hearing protection, providing training, and evaluating the adequacy of protectors. Alternatively, employers can change tools, equipment, and schedules to reduce exposure below 85 dBA.
(https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/noisehearingconservation/loud.html)

It is important you understand noise hazards in your workplace. You need to have the correct hearing protections in place so that you can keep your hearing.