

## Toolbox Talks

### Weekly Tailgate Topic\_

**12-32**

Discuss with crews on \_\_\_\_\_ [INSERT DATE]

### Hearing Protection is for Everyone

*Why?* Everyone is exposed to loud noise at some time in their lives—even babies! Lawn mowing, fitness classes, truck and tractor pulls, airplanes, table saws, rock concerts, snowmobiles—all these environments can be too loud. The decibel is a unit used to express sound level, and “loud noise” means sounds that are more than 80 decibels. Loud noise can be very hazardous to your health and particularly to your hearing. Over time, exposure to loud sounds on a regular basis can result in permanent hearing loss. You often don’t know you have the hearing problem until it is too late to do anything about it. Sudden, VERY loud noises, like explosions, can cause instant hearing loss.

**Why is hearing loss a problem?** Imagine being cut off from all the things that are important to you—friends, family, TV, radio, MUSIC! It’s not a comforting thought. When you’re born, your hearing is as good as it will ever be, so you need start protecting it as soon as you can. Hearing loss due to loud noise is preventable, but it is NOT treatable once you have it.

**So what kind of hearing protection should I wear?** Either earplugs or earmuffs are fine. For noise exposure outside of the workplace, most types sold in safety stores or hardware stores will block out enough noise to protect your hearing. Pick a style that you like the look of and feels comfortable to wear.

**Really, what’s the BEST hearing protector?** The best hearing protector is one that you will want to wear for the entire time you’re exposed to noise.

**How should they fit?** Earplugs should fit snugly in your ear canal and someone looking at you should have a hard time seeing them. If they stick out too far, they’re not blocking sound. Earmuffs should fit close to your head, with no gaps. There is another style of hearing protector called the “banded” earplug—it’s an earplug (that can go into the ear canal or sit over it) on a headband.

**How long do they last?** Foam (“disposable”) earplugs will last for about 10 wearings; other earplugs will last about 1 year. The custom molded type, made of medical silicone, will last about 3-4 years. Earmuffs will last about 4-5 years, but you must replace the cuff (the part that sits right on your skin) every year. The oils and sweat from your skin will make the plastic of the cuff deteriorate.

### Questions to Generate Discussion

- What tasks do you carry out that require hearing protection?
- Give an example of a task that would require you to wear ear muffs rather than ear plugs.

- Where can you get hearing protection?