

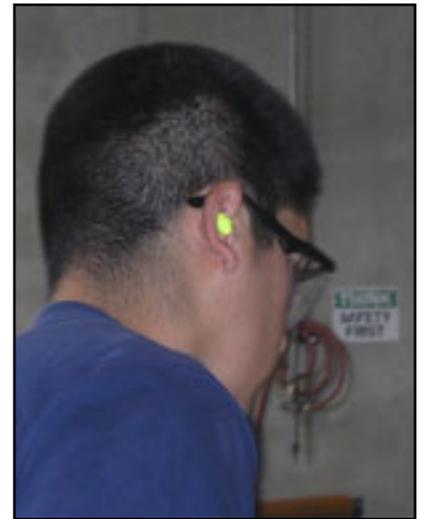
STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Safety Scene

Hearing Conservation Programs by SBC Staff

Listen up while you can! Implementing a hearing conservation program in your plant is an important safety measure to consider.



Since 1972, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has required employers to fill out Forms 300 and 300A, known as the injury and illness logs. Because work-related hearing loss has come to light as an ongoing and critical issue, OSHA has revised its 300 and 300A logs in the last year to reflect the need to monitor hearing loss as its own work-related injury. Now the forms include a column to list cases where hearing loss occurs.

According to Dave Schmidt, a lead economist in OSHA's office of statistical analysis, this was a much needed change. "In the past, we didn't have a column for the employer to check if there was a hearing loss," he stated. "OSHA lacked the knowledge of the extent of occupational hearing loss. This will help us analyze how effective our hearing conservation program is."

Implementing a hearing conservation program is not always necessary in component manufacturing facilities. The specific size and type of building your production takes place in can greatly affect the continual sound levels employees are exposed to. However, federal regulations require you to "administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program... whenever employee noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average sound level (TWA) of 85 decibels measures on the A scale (slow response) or, equivalently, a dose of fifty percent." (For more specific information, please see OSHA standard 1910.95 on Occupational Noise Exposure.)

The first part of any hearing conservation program includes annual hearing tests, the second, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and all of the training associated with the PPE. There are several kinds of PPE that protect against high noise levels including single-use ear-plugs, pre-formed or molded earplugs and earmuffs, which must form a perfect seal around the ear.

The testing necessary to determine if you need a hearing conservation program can generally be obtained at little or no charge and is funded largely by OSHA and provided by professional safety and health consultants. For more information on consultation services, visit www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/consult.html.

To pose a question for this column or to learn more about WTCA's Operation Safety Program, contact WTCA Staff at 608/274-4849, email wtca@woodtruss.com, or view the Operation Safety demonstration online at www.wtcatko.com.

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