

Jobsite: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
G.C. \_\_\_\_\_

**SMOHIT Body Maintenance**

**Toolbox Talks for the Sheet Metal Industry**

**Hearing Protection**

- Sheet metal workers are constantly exposed to noise from power tools, machinery, construction equipment and other sources (*Can lead to Tinnitus or noises in the ear, which will be discussed in the next Toolbox Talk, Ergonomics 13*).
- Exposure to 90 decibels for over a one-hour period is the recognized threshold for hearing damage.
  - Exposure to 90 decibels requires hearing protection.
  - Noise levels below 90 decibels can still be damaging so it is a good idea to always protect your hearing.
- One way to gauge the noise level is to do a "shout" test.
  - Stand about 3 feet away from a co-worker and ask him or her to say something without shouting.
  - If you can't understand what was said, the work environment is too noisy. Wear hearing protection.
- Workers often feel that hearing protection is not required or that it is uncomfortable to wear.
  - Hearing loss occurs gradually; by the time you notice it there may already be irreversible damage.
- Hearing protection can include earmuffs and earplugs.
  - Initially, you may experience a slight discomfort when a seal is made between the skin and ear protector.
    - Check the seal several times a day.
    - Talking and chewing can loosen earplugs.
- If earplugs are properly designed, fitted and cleaned, they should cause little to no discomfort to the wearer.
  - Earplugs are made of neoprene and other soft materials in order to prevent injury to the ear canal.
  - There is very little chance of injury or skin irritation as long as the earplugs are kept clean.

**Notes:**

**Instructor Tips**

- **Stress the importance of how noise can be harmful if you don't take measures to protect yourself.**
- **Explain that length of exposure is just as important as noise level.**
- **Demonstrate the "shout" test.**
- **Demonstrate the proper method of fitting and using earplugs and earmuffs.**
- **Have workers discuss several situations (equipment, tools, etc.) that typically create elevated noise levels.**

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Ergonomics (12)