

# PREVENTING HEARING LOSS

**IF NOISE LEVELS EXCEED 85 DECIBELS (DBA) OVER AN EIGHT-HOUR PERIOD OR 140 DBC PEAK SOUND LEVEL. YOU'LL NEED TO USE HEARING PROTECTION TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM OCCUPATIONAL NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS. ONCE YOU LOSE YOUR HEARING IT'S GONE FOR GOOD.**

- **REDUCE THE RISK OF HEARING LOSS BY SELECTING THE CORRECT HEARING PROTECTION AND MAINTAINING YOUR HEARING PROTECTION**
- **CORRECTLY INSERTING FOAM PLUG HEARING PROTECTION**
- **ANNUAL HEARING TESTS**



**BC Forest Safety**

Safety is **good** business

# PREVENTING HEARING LOSS



## HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK

If noise levels exceed 85 decibels (dBA) over an eight-hour period or 140 dBC peak sound level. You'll need to use hearing protection to protect yourself from occupational noise-induced hearing loss. Once you lose your hearing it's gone for good.

## SELECTING THE CORRECT HEARING PROTECTION

1) Workers need to have appropriate hearing protection that fits them and is suitable for their work activities and noise exposure?

- Hearing protection comes in many styles, shapes, and sizes. Your employer will help you with options that fit properly, feel comfortable, and are suitable for the environment you are working in.

### TYPES OF HEARING PROTECTION:

- A) Earplugs are inserted in the ear canal. They may be (preformed, malleable, rolldown foam, push-to-fit, or custom molded.
- B) Semi-insert earplugs which consist of two earplugs held over the ends of the ear canal by a rigid headband or are attached to a string.
- C) Earmuffs consist of sound-attenuating material and soft ear cushions that fit around the ear and hard outer cups. They can be attached to a hard hat or held together by a head band.

## MAINTAINING YOUR HEARING PROTECTION:

2) Do you know how to wear and maintain your hearing protection?

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Check hearing protection regularly for wear and tear.
- Replace ear cushions or plugs that are no longer pliable.
- Replace a unit when head bands are stretched and they do not keep ear cushions snugly against the head.
- Disassemble earmuffs to clean.
- Wash earmuffs with a mild liquid detergent in warm water, and then rinse in clear warm water. Ensure that the sound-attenuating material inside the ear cushions does not get wet.
- Use a soft brush to remove skin oil and dirt that can harden ear cushions.
- Squeeze excess moisture from the plugs or cushions and then place them on a clean surface to air dry. (Check the manufacturer's recommendations first to find out if the earplugs are washable.)

## CORRECTLY INSERTING EAR PLUGS PROTECTION

- Use the right size.
- Roll the plug firmly between your thumb and forefinger into a cylinder. Start gently so there are no creases and press more firmly as the earplug gets compressed.
- Reach around your head, lift your ear up and back, and with your other hand, insert the plug firmly into the ear canal. Hold it in place for a moment and wait for the material to expand.
- Check for signs of a good fit; they should be invisible or barely visible from the front. Your own voice should sound lower and muffled to you, and the plug should feel snug.

## ANNUAL HEARING TEST

Annual hearing tests are vital because they identify noise-induced hearing loss long before workers notice it and let you know if the hearing conservation program is working. Workers receive an initial hearing test within 6 months of hiring and then annually.

If you have not received hearing protection yet and you think you need it, or you don't know how to wear the protection you've been given, be sure to speak up and ask your supervisor or employer.