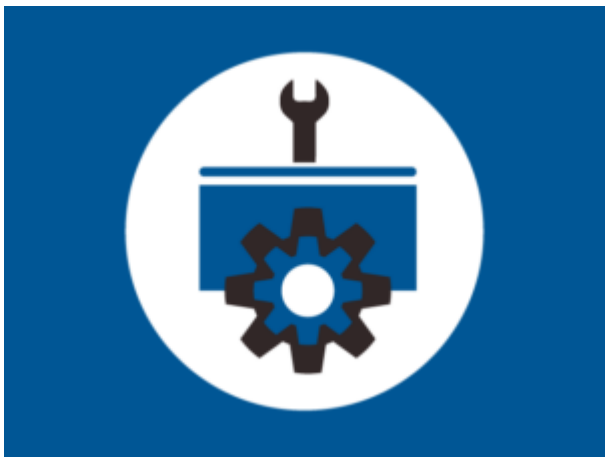
NIOSH Preventing Occupational Hearing Loss



A practical guide on protecting workers from one of the most pervasive occupational health problems in America today.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hearing loss is one of the most pervasive occupational health problems in America today. Approximately 30 million workers are exposed on their jobs to noise levels or toxicants that are potentially hazardous to their hearing. Fortunately, noise-induced hearing loss can be reduced, or often eliminated, through the successful application of occupational hearing loss prevention programs.

A successful hearing loss prevention program benefits both the company and the affected employee. Employees are spared disabling hearing impairments and evidence suggests that they may experience less fatigue and generally better health. Ultimately, the company benefits from reduced medical expenses and worker compensation costs. In some cases there may be improved morale and work efficiency.

The existence of a hearing loss prevention program (even one that complies with government standards) does not guarantee the prevention of occupational hearing loss. Experiences with successful hearing loss prevention programs show that management needs to develop and…