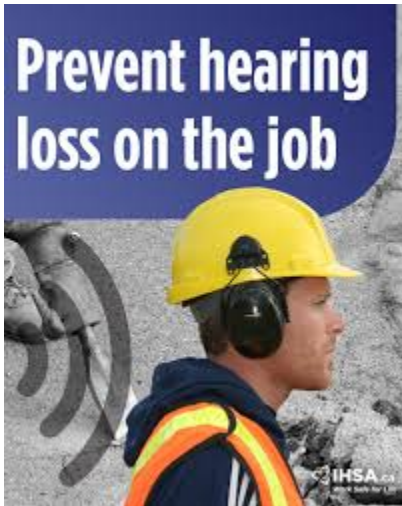


TOOLBOX TALK #20

HEARING LOSS IN CONSTRUCTION



Construction workers who are exposed to noise on the job face a higher risk of hearing loss than noise-exposed workers in all other industries do, results of a recent NIOSHA study show.

Researchers examined data from more than 1.3 million noise-exposed workers who underwent at least one hearing test between 2010 and 2019.

Among the nearly 27,000 construction workers participating in the study, 23% had hearing loss. That compared with 20% for participants in all other industries combined.

The construction sub-sectors with the highest occurrence for hearing loss: highway, street and bridge construction (28%); site preparation contractors (26%); new single-family housing construction (except operative builders:25%); oil and gas pipeline and related structures construction (25%); and other building finishing contractors (25%).

NIOSH says employers and workers can prevent occupational hearing loss by:

- Buying quieter construction equipment
- Keeping moving parts oiled and well-maintained so they produce less noise
- Enclosing noise sources
- Establishing administrative controls that reduce the number of workers and the amount of time spent in noisy areas

The researchers emphasize that although personal protective equipment shouldn't be the lone solution to reduce exposure, employers must encourage workers to consistently and correctly wear their hearing protection.

Additionally, when exposed to harmful chemicals that can cause hearing loss, workers should wear gloves, long sleeves, eye protection and respirators (when appropriate), and work in well-ventilated areas to reduce or eliminate exposures.