

Training and Motivation

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Purpose

To describe training, motivation methods and content of a best-practice hearing conservation program.

Chapter Topics

- Worker Training Program and Requirements
- Training Tips and Techniques
- Motivation
- Documentation

Worker training and motivation are key factors in the success of a **hearing conservation program** (HCP).¹ **Occupational hearing conservationists** (OHCs) are the most likely HCP member to provide training due to their familiarity with workers, work process, and environment; their access to workers; and their knowledge of company policies. Regardless of who provides the training, the goal is to promote understanding of the program's purposes and procedures so that workers become engaged members of the occupational hearing conservation team. In this chapter, we discuss the requirements, opportunities and principles of effective training techniques and strategies. We also give suggestions and examples for documenting the training process to facilitate program evaluation.

Worker Training Program and Requirements

This section describes core content for best-practice hearing conservation training programs.

Structuring the Message

Training must be current, relevant and structured to engage workers in understanding and accepting the message. Using training material that is updated at least annually is essential to maintaining interest. Focusing training on how hearing loss affects workers' job performance and quality of life is critical.

Management must emphasize the importance of all aspects of the HCP, especially training and education. Unless management sees this as a high priority and enforces attendance at regular hearing conservation training sessions, motivating workers will be difficult. Worker engagement in training begins by sharing the ultimate goal of an HCP: preventing hearing loss through protection from hazardous noise. Major elements are:

- Engineering controls (noise barriers, "Buy Quiet" policies)
- Administrative controls (team approach, job rotation, breaks)
- Personal **hearing protection devices** (HPDs)

Communicate that engineering and administrative controls are the primary defenses against noise. Reducing or eliminating the noise itself or removing a worker from the noise eliminates or reduces the threat.² Defining these 2 control methods and giving several examples of each helps engage workers in brainstorming about their role as the "ears" of the HCP. For example, workers are often the first to observe an increased noise level from equipment and suggest ways to make it quieter (engineering control). Workers may suggest quiet areas in their work environment for breaks (administrative control). Personal HPDs are not considered engineering or administrative controls but rather the last defense in controlling the noise hazard. However, the effective use of earplugs and earmuffs is still very important. Structuring the message to encourage their proper use is important because it depends on the worker's behavior.

Requirements

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) regulations don't require employers to include noise-monitoring results in the training program, but OSHA (Appendix C of this manual) section (e) states, "The employer shall notify each worker exposed at or above an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) of 85 dBA of the results of the monitoring." Section (f) requires employers to "provide affected workers or their representatives with an opportunity to observe any noise measurements." MSHA's requirements in section 62.110 are similar. Workers should know the approximate level and source of their noise exposures. Discussing easily understood examples (eg, demonstrating how to use the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (NIOSH) interactive noise level meter)³ teaches participants about different occupational and non occupational noise sources. Remember that regulatory requirements are considered *minimal* standards. Like the NIOSH noise level meter, multiple resources and readings are available to facilitate training and emphasize best practices.

Explain the basic principles of **noise control**, emphasizing the company's noise-control program. Workers may have good