



MEL SAFETY INSTITUTE SHIFT BRIEFING

Hearing Protection – Understanding OSHA’s Action Level and PEL

Noise is considered the most preventable occupational injury because almost 100% of exposure to dangerous noise in the workplace is preventable.

OSHA sets two limits on noise exposure in the workplace.

Action Level of 85 decibels - OSHA provides an Action Level when exposure to something, in this case noise, is nearing the dangerous level, and OSHA wants the employer to take steps to start to control the noise.

Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) of 90 decibels – Remember a PEL is the exposure that most workers should not have any injurious effects from exposure for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year, over a 30 year career. We can do better than this minimum standard!

OSHA uses a 5 decibel exchange rate. This means that when the noise level is increased by 5 decibels, the amount of time a person can be exposed to a certain noise level to receive the same dose is cut in half. This is why OSHA allows 8 hours of exposure to 90 decibels, but only 4 hours of exposure to 95 decibels, and only 2 hours of exposure to 100 decibels. **What would this mean to you if a muffler was missing or rotted?**

In General, we should be using hearing protection when working with or around loud equipment like: lawn mowers, weed whackers, backpack blowers, back hoes, front-end loaders, and circular saws.

Normally, a calibrated Sound Pressure Level Meter would be used to determine the noise level in the immediate area. However, there are also several FREE smart phone apps available that can give you a pretty good idea of the noise level in your work area.



The “NIOSH Sound Level Meter” app



If you have an iPhone, NIOSH actually recognizes the results of the SPLnFFT

Search in your app store. If you get a reading of over 85 decibels, please let **WHO** know and we will investigate further.

Any Questions?

This lesson plan is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, please contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.