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Weekly Safety Tip

Life Is All About Choices![®]

April 25, 2016

SCI Safety Tip: Study identifies workers at highest risk of hearing loss and tinnitus

Source: <http://www.blr.com>

Date: April 22, 2016

Most employers are aware that occupational noise has the potential to cause permanent hearing loss in exposed workers. Less well known, and less studied, is the link between occupational noise exposure and tinnitus. A new study from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) looks at both conditions, teasing out their individual prevalence, how often they occur together, and how they are connected to occupational noise exposure.

Tinnitus: Do you hear what I hear?

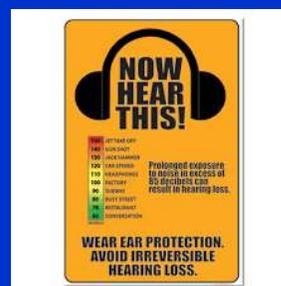
Noise-induced hearing loss is the most widely known and well understood effect of occupational noise exposure, but other effects, like increased stress and cardiovascular issues, are less well defined. Tinnitus, or “ringing in the ears,” is another condition known to be connected to noise exposure but without much detail. It’s different from hearing loss, although the two conditions sometimes occur together.

Rather than diminished hearing, tinnitus is sound that is perceived in one or both ears even when the environment has no source of sound. It can disrupt sleep and concentration, increasing fatigue, reducing alertness, and degrading performance—all factors that can lead to accidents, both on and off the job.

The NIOSH study is the first to look at occupationally induced tinnitus. Before this study was published, there were no reliable estimates of how common tinnitus was in the workplace.



SCI Safety Slogan



James Lehrke-SCI

NIOSH's findings

NIOSH used the 2007 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)—which includes detailed self-reported information from workers on hearing difficulty, tinnitus, and exposures to occupational noise—to generate its estimates. According to the NHIS data, the incidence of hearing difficulty among workers who had never been exposed to occupational noise was 7 percent. In that same group, 5 percent reported tinnitus, and 2 percent reported having both conditions. Among workers who had at any point in their working life been exposed to occupational noise, the incidence of both conditions was much higher: 23 percent reported hearing difficulty, 15 percent reported tinnitus, and 9 percent reported both.

Practice Tip

Tinnitus sufferers may benefit from treatment with antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs.

Highest risk industries

The risk of tinnitus varies by industry. Workers were at increased risk if they had ever held jobs in:

- *Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.* These workers had a significantly increased risk of hearing difficulty, tinnitus, and their co-occurrence.
- *Manufacturing.* These workers also had significantly higher risk for hearing difficulty, tinnitus, and the co-occurrence.
- *Life, physical and social sciences, and personal care and service occupations.* These workers were at significantly higher risk of hearing difficulty.
- *Architecture and engineering.* These workers had a significantly increased risk of tinnitus.

One set of workers was at a reduced risk. Workers in sales and related occupations had significantly lower chance of developing hearing difficulty, tinnitus, or both.

Prevention and treatment of tinnitus

Tinnitus has more than one possible cause. For example, more than 200 medications are known to have tinnitus as a side effect. Exposure to bomb blasts is another cause, making tinnitus one of the most common service-related disabilities among combat veterans.

But work-related tinnitus is most commonly caused by the same exposure that causes hearing loss: occupational noise. So if you are working to prevent noise-induced hearing loss, you are also doing what you need to do to prevent noise-induced tinnitus.

What you might not be doing is sending workers who suffer from tinnitus for treatment. Effective treatment is available for the condition and includes:

- *Hearing aids.* These can help improve overall hearing and make tinnitus less noticeable.
- *Wearable sound generators.* Like hearing aids, these small electronic devices are inserted in the ear. They mask tinnitus with a soft, pleasant sound chosen by the wearer.
- *Tabletop sound generators.* Tabletop generators can be used at home to assist in relaxation or sleep.
- *Acoustic neural stimulation.* Stimulation delivers a broadband acoustic signal embedded in music to desensitize sufferers and can reduce or eliminate tinnitus.
- *Cochlear implants.* These are used to treat people who are suffering from both tinnitus and severe hearing loss. The implants bypass the damaged inner ear, directly stimulating the auditory nerve. They can mask tinnitus and stimulate change in the neural circuits.

Don't let workers think that no help is available if they suffer from tinnitus. They can seek treatment, and their quality of life and job performance will likely improve if they do.

SCI OSHA News: Pitfalls of Non-Compliance

Source: <http://www.blr.com> Part 1

Date: April 21, 2016

Employees are your biggest asset! Keep them safe at all costs!

Following safety regulations isn't just the right thing to do—it keeps employers on the right side of OSHA enforcement and saves money by avoiding fines, legal fees, and more. Keep reading to learn about seven companies that ran afoul of OSHA regulations and paid the price.



Money and Stress

Are you stressed out about money? Does a discussion about money in your home cause a fight? Apparently we are still stressed out in this country and mostly over money. In an article in the Los Angeles Times Melissa Healy reports that more than one in four Americans feel stressed over money most or all of the time. Most people said that their stress over money was about the same as last year or gotten worse.

In a survey by the American Psychological Association, Americans ranked their stress factors in the following order: money, work, family responsibilities and health concerns. Lower income respondents reported they lived a less healthful lifestyle. Included in their answers were skipping or considered skipping a needed trip to the doctor out of financial concerns.

Over the years I have met with many clients who suffer from anxiety, depression and stress because of their financial situation. So what are the answers to stress and money? Because most of us are secretive about how much we make and how much we owe, there isn't a lot of conversation about options that may be available to help someone struggling financially each month. Money management is a skill and like any skill it has to be learned and practiced to build sufficiency.

Since 1972 Aurora Family Service has been home to Consumer Credit Counseling Service. This service is available to anyone in Wisconsin who needs help with their budget, improving their credit or getting out of debt. Counselors do a confidential, thorough financial assessment with the client and together they develop action steps and goals. When appropriate we can make new arrangements with many credit card companies to lower interest rates and payments to help our clients get out of debt faster. If you don't live in Wisconsin, you can contact the National Foundation for Consumer Credit (NFCC) for a nonprofit credit counseling agency near you.

The important thing is to take steps to evaluate your spending and develop a plan that works for your family and can alleviate stress.

Hospital fined for needlestick injuries

Hospital
New Jersey OSHA Region 2

Serious violations: In October 2015, an OSHA inspector investigating a complaint at a hospital reviewed the facility's OSHA 300 logs and found an unusual number of needlestick injuries and bloodborne pathogen exposure incidents. The hospital was issued with nine serious citations for failing to provide employee training on the hazards of methylene chloride, monitor employees exposed to methylene chloride, immediately discard sharps in appropriate containers, and ensure that its bloodborne pathogen program included engineering controls to prevent needlesticks. The hospital was also cited with several other-than-serious violations for incomplete OSHA 300 logs, failure to fit-test temporary workers for respirators, and other issues.

Penalty: \$55,000 fine

Workers exposed to lead

Painting contractor
Pennsylvania OSHA Region 3

Willful and serious violations: An OSHA inspection of an abrasive blasting operation found that employees were exposed to lead as they removed paint on water tanks. While employees used respirators, the employer chose not to use ventilation units it had on-site to reduce the levels of lead inside the tank. Inspectors also found the company failed to follow proper decontamination procedures for employees exposed to lead. For these and other hazards, the company was cited with 2 willful, 13 serious, and 6 other-than-serious violations.

Penalty: \$121,880 fine

In Loving Memory...
Jessica, Kristin and [heart icon]

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