

Top Hearing Protection Questions

Brought To You by 3M | May 18, 2018

Q: What if my employees don't like wearing hearing protection?

A: If "the products are uncomfortable" due to ear pressure, suggest low pressure PVC earplugs from the Classic™ family. If the plug is too hard, suggest a polyurethane plug such as the E-A-Rsoft™ Yellow Neons™.

A: If "employees want a plug that's easier and quicker to use," suggest the Push-Ins. This patented plug does not require roll-down and is easy to insert.

Q: What's the best hearing protector for my employees?

A: "Best" is often determined by the user's willingness to wear hearing protection properly that feels comfortable, and provides the needed attenuation (noise protection).

Q: When should my employees replace their earplugs?

A: Disposable and Push-to-Fit Earplugs — Washing disposable and push-to-fit earplugs is not recommended but they can be reused several times before they are thrown away. Replace foam earplugs daily or more often if they are damaged, dirty or coated with earwax, or no longer soft and pliable or do not return to their original uncompressed shape when removed from the ear.

A: Reusable Earplugs — Reusable earplugs may last several weeks or months depending upon the type, as well as environmental factors. They should be replaced if they tear, crack, or lose their original shape. Wash them with mild soap and warm water as needed. When dry, store them in a carrying case.

Q: What should my employees use in a noisy environment?

A: Select a suitable variety of hearing protectors that provide adequate noise reduction based on applicable national or local regulations and guidelines.

A: Take into consideration the potential risk of overprotection and ability of wearers to hear important sounds.

Q: Should my decision be based solely on the highest attenuation rating?

A: The hearing protector should match the noise exposure of the employee, but comfort is also an important factor since comfortable hearing protectors are likely to be worn more of the time and worn correctly. The hearing protector should also provide a suitable fit. Offering too little or too much protection can both be undesirable.

A: If the user insists on always using the highest attenuating product, don't fight it. 3M offers many very high attenuation options that can meet their needs.

Q: Would one earplug work for all my employees?

A: Every ear canal is different and has a different size and shape. In general, one earplug would not fit every employee comfortably.

A: Offer several different kinds of hearing protection in order to provide the comfortable options for

every employee.

A: 3M recommends validating protection through hearing fit testing (*i.e. E-A-Rfit*) for each employee.

Q: What should my employees use if they often have dirty hands?

A: Offer the employee a Push-to-Fit style earplug. Push-to-Fit are easy to keep clean since no roll-down is required.

A: Employees could also use earmuffs. They work well with dirty hands and are easy to take on and off frequently.

For more information regarding 3M hearing protection, please visit MSCDirect.com.

www.mscdirect.com/betterMRO

Copyright ©2025 MSC Industrial Supply Co.