

APPENDIX B – HEARING PROTECTION

Workplace noise is one of the most common occupational health hazards. The main health effect of overexposure to loud noise is permanent noise induced hearing loss which will continue to worsen if the worker remains exposed. When worn correctly, hearing protectors reduce noise exposure levels and risk of hearing loss. Appropriate and effective hearing protection must be worn at all times in noisy workplaces. Always select appropriate equipment and use it consistently. Employers and workers must comply with the hearing conservation requirements in Part 12 of the Manitoba Regulation 217/06.

TYPES OF HEARING PROTECTION INCLUDE:

- **EAR PLUGS** – can be pre-moulded (preformed) or mouldable (foam ear plugs). They are sold as disposable or reusable plugs which make them convenient. They are also compact and useful in situations where other PPE such as glasses and respirators are being worn.
- **SEMI-INSERT EAR PLUGS (CANAL CAPS)** - worn under the chin which makes them useful if workers are in and out of noisy situations throughout the shift. They are easy to insert and remove.
- **EAR MUFFS** – highly visible, quickly retrievable, and useful if a worker's hands are dirty or they are wearing gloves.
- **CUSTOM MOLDED EAR PLUG** – are poured and molded/fitted to the workers ear canal.



SELECTION OF HEARING PROTECTION:

All hearing protection must conform to CSA Z94.2. Choosing the correct hearing protection depends on many factors, one of which includes determining an appropriate device that will help reduce the noise levels reaching the ear. A device should not block out too much sound, otherwise a worker may feel isolated by the silence. In order to select the correct PPE, determine the noise level in the workplace. In general, many occupations exposed to noise have daily average exposures less than 95dB. Some important factors to look at when selecting effective hearing protection:

- the daily noise exposure and communication needs of the worker.
- who will be wearing the equipment and any physical constraints of the worker;
- compatibility with other PPE that must be worn;
- workplace conditions such as temperature and humidity;
- comfort level, individual preferences, ease of use and handling;

Important note: hearing protection is mandatory for workers to wear when exposed to 85dBA or greater.

USE, CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF HEARING PROTECTION:

- For an earplug to be inserted correctly it must completely block the ear canal. While this does not cause pain to the wearer, it will create a feeling of slight pressure and there should be resistance when it is pulled on.
- Single use foam earplugs must be discarded after each use for proper hygiene reasons.
- Multiple use earplugs can be washed with mild soap and water and patted dry with a towel.
- Custom molded hearing protection can be cleaned with mild soapy water and dried with a paper towel to remove dust and wax buildup from the ear. Musician's ear plugs must have the filter removed before cleaning.
- Earmuffs must provide a good fit over the outer ear and must be cleaned on a regular basis using alcohol wipes or mild soap and water. Do not dip into water. Ear cushions can degrade over time, replace when this occurs.
- Hearing protection must be inspected on a regular basis and if damaged, it must be replaced immediately.