

OCCUPATIONAL HEARING LOSS: 4 TRENDS YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO



Work-related Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) remains one of the most common permanent and preventable injury in U.S. and Canada. So what does the future hold for this ‘silent’, and too often neglected, illness? Unlike most injuries, it’s difficult to tell when you’ve been affected by NIHL because it’s painless and progressive. Increased awareness is the key to prevention as the following 4 trends demonstrate.

1 REGULATIONS ARE RECOGNIZING NIHL AS A MAJOR RISK

Hearing conservation is not always top of mind as the effects of NIHL are painless and progressive. Both the OSHA Regulations and CSA Z1007 Standard evaluates the importance of hearing protection. Guidance is given on all aspects of hearing loss prevention from detection of potential toxic noise through to proactive measures to determine if the program is effective. This cements NIHL as a major safety risk employers need to assess and provide training to ensure workers are properly equipped to work in noisy environments.

2 GROWING AWARENESS OF CONSEQUENCES FOR BUSINESS

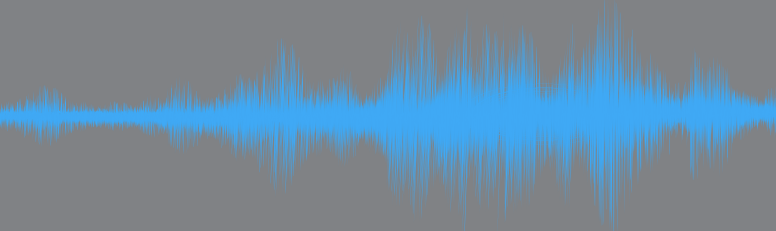
It is becoming more and more apparent that the effects of NIHL are not only felt by individuals, but also by businesses. Incidents and payouts are on the rise with employers paying **\$1.5 million** in penalties for not protecting workers from noise and a staggering **\$242 million** is spent on workers’ compensation for hearing loss disability. Increasing awareness of this means that tackling NIHL is becoming a top priority for businesses that not only want to protect their workforce’s health, but also reduce cost and improve productivity.

3 FIT-TESTING IS TAKING CENTER STAGE

Improperly fitting hearing protection is one of the main causes of NIHL. This is why training programs and hearing protection with integrated fit-testing should always be at the heart of any hearing conservation effort. The good news is that the importance of fit-testing is increasingly being recognized by the safety industry and is expected to become a legal requirement in some countries. The US-based Directorate of Standards & Guidance, for example, recognised the importance of ensuring that “PPE must properly fit each employee” at the 2017 International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) Annual Meeting. Additionally, a standard for fit testing system performance has been approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and is expected to be published in 2019. This is promising because making fit-testing mandatory would go a long way towards tackling NIHL.

4 PROTECTING THE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF WORKERS

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **1.1 billion young people are at risk of NIHL globally**. Strikingly, nearly half of all teenagers and young adults (12 – 35 year olds) in middle- and high-income countries are exposed to unsafe levels of sound from the use of personal audio devices and 4 in 10 are at risk of damaging their hearing at clubs, discos and bars[1]. **Millennials are subsequently more likely to enter the workplace with pre-existing hearing damage**. However, raising awareness of NIHL by instilling good practice into the next generation while they are at work can help prevent further injury inside, and outside, of the workplace.



For further information on the risks associated with NIHL, download the whitepaper ‘Understanding the causes and consequences of occupational hearing loss [here](#).

For more information

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References:

1. WHO 2015, hearing loss due to recreational exposure to loud sounds: a review