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Building Trades National Medical Screening Program

P.O. Box 900960 ▪ Seattle, WA 98109 ▪ 1-800-866-9663

NOISE

What is noise?

Noise is made of pressure waves that can travel through air, liquids, or solids. The pressure waves are transmitted through your ear drum and middle ear to the inner ear, where hearing takes place.

Noise is measured in decibels. A small increase in decibels means a large increase in sound. For instance, 73 decibels is about twice as loud as 70 decibels.

Normal conversation measures about 60 decibels. Chainsaws measure about 110 decibels and jackhammers are about 120 decibels. Noise levels greater than 80 decibels damage hearing. Exposure to high levels of noise can lead to temporary hearing loss. Over time, repeated exposure to high levels of noise causes permanent hearing loss. The damage may not be noticed because it is painless and worsens gradually.

Heavy equipment, power tools, and machinery are all sources of loud noise. Working around such equipment without proper hearing protection can cause you to lose hearing.

What is the purpose of this exam?

Your screening interview showed that you may have been exposed to high noise at work. This exam will help us see if you have health problems from high noise exposure.

What are we looking for?

We are looking for hearing loss. You will receive a hearing test which is also called *audiometry*. This test measures your ability to hear sounds at different volumes and frequencies. With age, we tend to lose our hearing at the higher frequencies first. Noise causes hearing loss in the middle and high frequencies.

Loud noise can also raise your blood pressure and may contribute to heart disease. We will measure your blood pressure as part of the exam.

You will receive a letter summarizing your exam and photocopies of your test results. All your results are confidential, as defined in your Consent Statement.

What if my test results are positive?

If your tests show that you have a hearing loss or other health problems, you will be referred to your doctor or a specialist for follow-up tests.

What else should I do?

Wear the hearing protection provided by your employer. Away from work, protect your hearing while using high-noise devices such as firearms, snowmobiles, lawn mowers, and leaf blowers. Even radios, television, and music players can be too loud. If you have to shout to hear someone three feet away, the noise is high enough to damage your hearing.

What if I have more questions?

If you have questions after this exam, ask your personal physician. Or call our toll-free number at 1-800-866-9663. We will refer you to a professional who can answer your questions.