

WHAT HAPPENED?



An individual works in a service shop and is routinely exposed to noise levels above 85 dBA (decibels). Thinking nothing of it, the worker continued to perform their duties for several years. The workers hearing was gradually decreasing but because it was such a slow decline, the worker was not aware.

During work one day, the worker began to hear ringing in his ear. Thinking it would just go away, the worker continued their day. The ringing continued into the next workday and that was when the worker determined something was wrong.

The worker told their employer about their condition and the employer suggested the worker seek medical attention. The worker was diagnosed with noise induced hearing loss and tinnitus.

WHAT DID/COULD HAVE WENT WRONG?

The worker was neglectful in protecting their hearing and did not take hearing protection seriously. As a result, he developed noise induced hearing loss and tinnitus.

The employer failed the worker as well. They did not enforce the use of personal protection equipment (PPE) among their staff and failed to use the hierarchy of controls to reduce the noise at the source.



KEY LESSON FROM INCIDENT

How loud is your workplace? – Saskatchewan legislation indicates hazardous noise levels begin at 85 dBA. Use a dosimeter for personal noise exposure levels or a sound level metre to see how loud an area is.

Reduce noise exposure – If it is determined that noise levels need to be reduced; it is most beneficial to try and reduce the noise at the source. Use quieter equipment (if possible) and perform regular maintenance to allow equipment to be well lubricated and work as intended.

Additional considerations include:

Constructing a barrier from workers and the noise source or enclosing the noise source may always be a viable option. Increase the distance from the noise source to the area of work being completed.

The use of PPE if other methods do not work. PPE should be considered a last line of defence.

Implement and regularly review a Hearing Conservation Plan – Saskatchewan legislation requires an employer to have a hearing conservation plan if 10 or more workers are exposed to 85 dBA or more. This plan should be checked every 3 years, at minimum, for any revisions or updates that are required.