Twin Cities Occupational Health and Rehabilitation®

NEWS YOU CAN USE

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www.tcohr.com

TCOHR is committed to partnering with employers and workers to help prevent workplace injuries and to return injured workers to productive work roles as soon as possible.

Ears Never Sleep

The human hearing mechanism is amazingly sensitive. Along with the ability to hear a pin drop (literally!), it can accommodate extreme sound pressures like gunshots and explosions. Damage starts to occur with extended exposures to sound levels of around 85 dBA. The higher the sound level, the longer the time of exposure, the greater the risk of damage. How can you tell when the sound around you, be it industrial, musical or otherwise, is reaching the point where it is dangerous to your hearing?

Here are a couple of clues to help figure out if the noise is too much for your ears.

Tinnitus; or ringing in the ears is a sign of potential damage. If you hear a ringing or a rushing sound in your ears, the sound level is too great.

Temporary Threshold Shift; after exposure to loud noise, you may lose some hearing, and then recover after a rest period in quiet. If after exposure, conversation sounds muffled or unclear; it's likely that you overloaded your hearing system.

Raise your voice; if you must strain your voice to be heard at a distance of three feet, sound levels are likely approaching the dangerous range.

The total, cumulative noise dose is of course the final word on how your hearing will last over time. Whether at home, work, or play, remember to preserve your hearing!

Suggestions for future articles? Please let us know. We appreciate your business!

Still Time For Flu Vaccine Clinics

November 7th saw the 1st reported flu case in MN (Dakota Co.), of the same strain for which the vaccine protects against. Both clinics take 1) walk-in's for vaccines! Or, 2) schedule an on-site vaccine clinic. We can accept cash from employees or we can bill your company. 3) Another popular option is to commit to X-number of employees to come in on their own during a given week. We will keep a list and bill you upon completion. Call us soon for workplace wellness!

Vikings-Lions Ticket Drawing

Win two of four great seats to the December 2nd game against the Detroit Lions.

The drawing will be held Monday November 26th. No need to be a current customer of TCOHR to win, no purchases necessary. Just go to our website and click on the email address at the bottom of the home page. Please type "tickets" on the subject line and in the message include your name, organization and daytime number. Good Luck!

Sleep-related Lawsuits Expected to Increase

According to the National Sleep Foundation, the employer of a person who causes an asleep-at-the-wheel accident can be sued if the fatigue is deemed work-related. Drowsy driving causes more than 100,000 crashes resulting in 71,000 injuries and over 1,500 deaths each year.

2520 Pilot Knob Road, Suite 250
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
(651) 224-8264 (TCOR)

10190 Baltimore St. N.E., Suite 100
Blaine, MN 55449
(763) 780-8264 (TCOR)

In addition to work-related fatigue, the number of people suffering from common sleep disorders has reached epidemic proportions. 50 to 70 million Americans are affected by sleep disorders including sleep apnea which causes the patient to stop breathing repeatedly during sleep. Sleep apnea is linked to high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke, not to mention lost productivity, on-the-job injuries and increased healthcare costs.

A **sleep study** involves arriving at the sleep center around 8 or 9 pm. Once settled into a room, the person is fitted with a number of sensors that will be monitored from another room. Once the person becomes drowsy after watching TV or reading, the person falls asleep. If one or more sleep disturbances are identified (including sleep apnea, excessive snoring, insomnia, excessive daytime sleepiness, night terrors, shift-work sleep disorder or narcolepsy) the person may be fitted with a CPAP or other device and monitored the remainder of the night. Upon awakening, the person is counseled. If the device improved their condition, they leave with it. CPAP devices for example, can store one year's worth of data that can be uploaded to show usage and effectiveness. Regular telephone follow-up's are part of the ongoing care provided to these patients.

To get the most benefit from a visit with your doctor, you will find it helpful to keep a diary of your sleep habits for about ten days to identify just how much sleep you're getting. To explore your options as an employer, please call our TCOHR staff to arrange a meeting.

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Respirator Fit Testing

OSHA clearly states that Qualitative Fit Testing is acceptable for the SCBA masks that most firefighters and many industry employees wear. Med Compass, partnered with TCOHR, believes that fire departments and those wearing canister full-face respirators are at increased risk when using the Qualitative Fit Testing method. Based on research, documentation and technology, many companies make it a policy to only use the Quantitative Fit Test method when testing fire departments or those on Hazmat teams.

OSHA states in 1910.134: "Exposure levels greater than 10 times the occupational exposure limit; must utilize a Quantitative Fit Test procedure for these respirators." What is OSHA saying here? OSHA has a list of exposure limits they refer to as PELs (Permissible Exposure Limits) for just about everything a respirator wearer would come into contact with. If the contaminant, solution, poison, etc. is 10 times greater than what OSHA allows, then one must use a Quantitative Fit Test method.

How do these specialized personnel truly know what the PEL is for every possible location they may enter? Only if air-sampling data from every possible location was performed in advance, then comparing the PELs to OSHA's table listed in 1910.134, would the respirator wearer be protected.

For specialized respirator wearers, this is not a realistic solution. You should also know, effective 2007, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has updated their standard. They now require that tight-fitting facepieces be tested with a Quantitative Fit Test (QNFT) instead of the previously-approved Qualitative Fit Test (QLFT).

General Industry may accept the Qualitative methodology in their *tested* environments, however Quantitative Fit Testing is recommended when unknown exposure levels are possible.

Guest Contributor Bob Millier, Med Compass

Holiday Clinic Hours

November 23rd
Mendota Heights will be open 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Blaine will be covered by Express Clinic (in bldg)

December 24th
Both clinics will be open 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

December 31st
Both clinics will be open 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

TCOHR works with employers to create pre-employment performance evaluations to ensure candidates can safely work within their capability.