



Safety Talk



June 2024

Use of Ear Buds in the Workplace

The use of ear buds has been increasing in the workplace. The use of ear buds in the workplace can have both positive and negative implications depending on the workplace and the manner that they are being used. We encourage workplaces to do their due diligence by conducting adequate research in the use of ear buds regarding their specific workplace to ensure the safety of their workers, customers and public.

As per the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) *“Music earphones or headsets are not substitutes for hearing protectors and should not be worn where hearing protectors are required to protect against exposure to noise. Select hearing protection that is: Correct for the job. Refer to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard Z94”.*

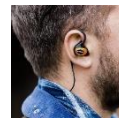
A risk assessment of the task should be conducted for those tasks where workers may want to use ear buds. The risk assessment should consider the following.

- **Type of work** – stationary or worker in motion (walking), customer service workers, tasks requiring some level of hearing from other workers, customers, fire alarms and equipment / machinery in the area.
- **Equipment / material in area** - hot surface, struck by equipment (forklift, pallet jack, vehicle), overhead hazards (racking) and tasks using sharp objects (knives and saws).
- **One ear out rule** - allowing only one ear bud in the ear at a time, allowing some hearing from the surroundings.
- **Time period for safe use of ear buds** - The length of time that the ear buds would be acceptable during that task (ex. store opening hours).
- **Acceptable volume of ear buds** – the volume to be acceptable to co-workers, and not exceeding the noise limited for impairment of hearing guidelines.

The assessment will provide the workplace with information to determine whether ear buds would be considered for the task and subsequently develop guidelines, procedures for the use of ear buds for those tasks that were deemed acceptable.

Collaboration between worker, joint health and safety committee and management is key in producing a healthy, safe, and productive workplace.

Northern Safety Solutions can assist your workplace with this assessment!



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