OXFORD BROOKES STUDENTS' UNION

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES (NOISE SUPPLEMENT)

TO BE ISSUED TO ALL EMPLOYEES

INTRODUCTION

Hearing loss caused by exposure to noise can occur and OBSU is committed to the responsible management of Noise At Work in order to protect employees, contractors and visitors from the effects of noise induced hearing loss as a result of work activities.

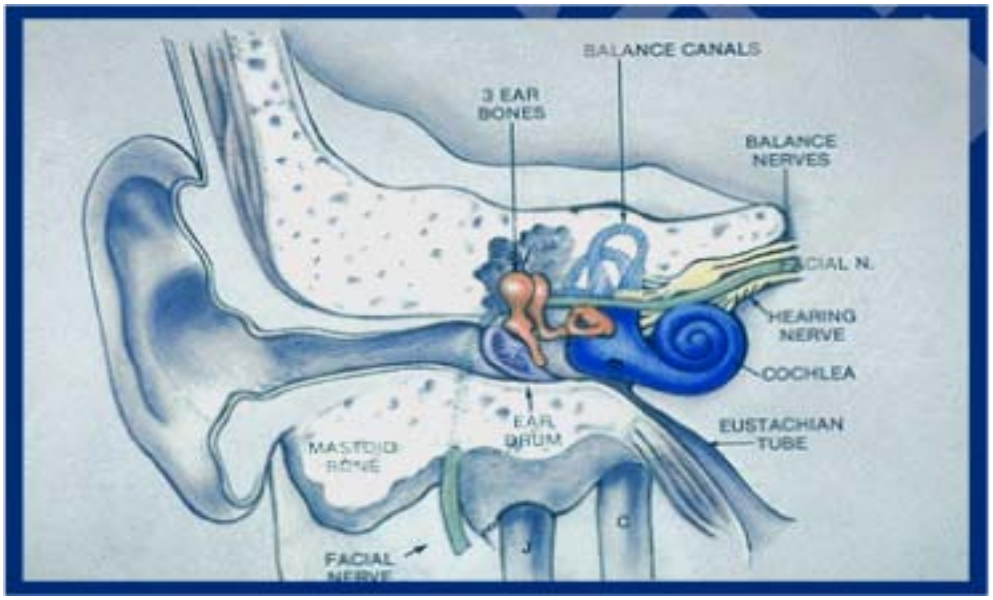
OBSU venue play host to a variety of types of activity from loud amplified music shows to spoken word productions and in those instances, there may be potential for exposure to loud noise. Managers will advise you on the category of show you are working on and will indicate which areas have been designated as Mandatory Hearing Protection Zones. This means you must wear the provided hearing protection that has been issued to you. Even if the area you are working in has not been declared as a Mandatory Hearing Protection Zone, you may request hearing protection from your manager if noise levels are likely to exceed the first action level of 80dB.

Where there is potential for noise levels to exceed 80dB (first action value) and 85dB (second action value) managers will also try to reduce exposure times by staff rotation.

THE EAR

The ear has three main parts: the outer, middle and inner ear. The outer ear (the part you can see) opens into the ear canal. The ear drum separates the ear canal from the middle ear. Small bones in the middle ear help to transfer sound to the inner ear. The inner ear contains the auditory nerve, which leads to the brain.

Any source of sound sends vibrations or sound waves into the air. These funnel through the ear opening, canal and strike your ear drum causing it to vibrate. These vibrations are passed on to the small bones in the middle ear, which transmit them to the auditory nerve in the inner ear. Here the vibrations become nerve impulses and go directly to the brain which interprets them as sound.



NOISE AND HEARING LOSS

Exposure to noise can cause:

- **Temporary Threshold Shift**

Can occur when a person has been exposed for a few hours to noise levels of about 80dB and above. These often leave a ringing in the ears for some time afterwards. The greater part of the hearing loss occurs soon after exposure and, simply, recovery occurs largely in the 30 minutes following removal from the noise. Persons exposed to continuous noise at a level of 100 dB(A) for an 8 hour working day could show a temporary threshold shift up to 40 dB in that part of the spectrum most affected. Such a shift may be caused by other means such as use of aspirin or other drugs.

- **Permanent Threshold Shift**

Occurs when the ear is subjected to high intensity noise day after day, causing more lasting damage. It is possible that a person may not recover full hearing between exposures and what started as a temporary threshold shift eventually becomes permanent.

- **Tinnitus**

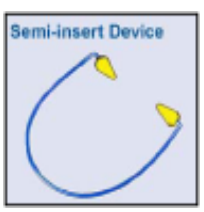
Sensation of a ringing, roaring, or buzzing sound in the ears or head.

HEARING PROTECTION

There are several different types of hearing protection but the following 3 are the ones you'll most likely encounter:

Disposable or formable plugs are in common use in venues and are compressed or shaped prior to insertion. They are generally made from expandable, slow recovery foam and one size fits almost everyone. Once in the ear, foam plugs expand to fit the contours of your ear and provide a custom fit.

Pre-molded plugs are made from flexible materials that are pre-formed to fit the ear. The image left shows the one size version but some manufacturers make various sizes. If you are unable to get used to the one size version, ask your manager for a different sort.



Semi-insert plugs, also known as banded ear plugs, are easier to fit than formable plugs and have the advantage of being easily removed if you are frequently leaving and entering a Hearing Protection Zone.

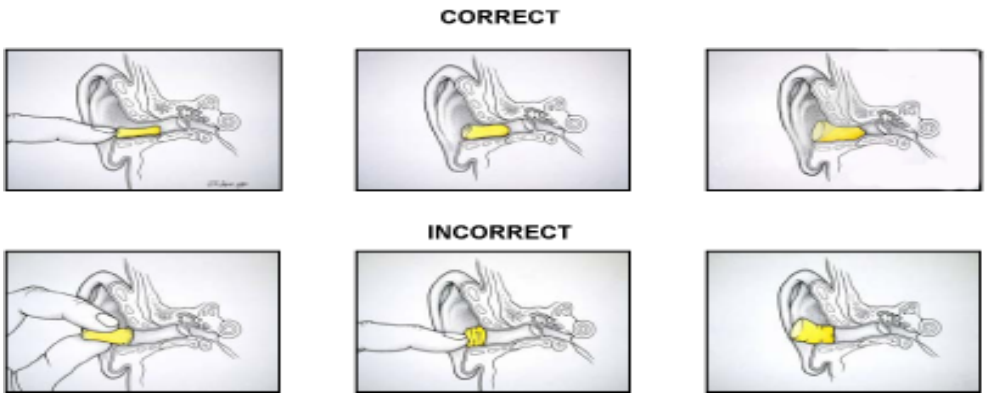
Earmuffs have rigid cups with soft plastic cushions that seal around the ear to block noise. Care must be taken to ensure that they form a complete seal.

FITTING OF FORMABLE (DISPOSABLE) EAR PLUGS

Ensure hands and plugs are clean prior to use.

Roll plug into a very thin, crease free, cylinder.
Crease free rolling is achieved by squeezing lightly as you begin but getting progressively harder as the cylinder gets more tightly compressed. Make sure that you roll, not twist, into a cylinder, rather than a cone or ball shape.

Insert the compressed ear plug into the ear canal. As long as you have compressed it thinly enough, it will slot easily into place.



CARE OF EAR PLUGS

As with all Personal Protective Equipment it is important to maintain and care for your Hearing Protection. Even disposable ear plugs can be used several times if they are looked after.

Disposable Ear Plugs

Keep the plugs clean and free from material that can irritate the ear canal. They may be washed in mild liquid detergent and warm water. Squeeze excess water from the plugs and allow to fully air dry. Washing may be repeated several times. Discard plugs if they change their firmness or do not re-expand to their original size and shape.

Banded Ear Plugs

A banded ear plug is easier to insert than a roll down plug and since it is kept in place by the headband force it does not need to be deeply inserted Since the plug part does not have to stay in the ear canal with friction it can also use softer and more flexible composites, allowing a higher degree of comfort.

Pre-molded Ear Plugs

Pre-molded ear plugs will normally last several months or more depending on their type and environmental factors. They should be replaced if they shrink or swell, harden or soften, tear, crack or become permanently deformed. Wash them in a mild detergent and rinse well. When dry they should be retained in a storage case.

Earmuffs

Cushions can be cleaned with warm soapy water and rinsed thoroughly. Do not use alcohol or other solvents. Cushions will sometimes need replacing if they become stiff, cracked or no longer seal. Do not modify earmuffs in any way and especially do not stretch or abuse the headbands as this will reduce protection.

SUMMARY

1) Wear your ear protection if you have been instructed that the area/venue is a Hearing Protection Zone
2) Ensure that your Hearing Protection is properly fitted
3) Look after your Hearing Protection
4) Avoid Hearing Protection Zones if you don’t have to be there
5) Even outside of work you can be exposed to excessive noise through I Pods and music, exactly the same principles as described in this document can be applied to your outside interests.

Declaration

Please fill in, print off and sign this page and return it to your line manager.

I _____ (print)

have read and understand this document in relation to Control Of Noise At Work Regulations 2005.

Sign _____

Date_____