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SPECIALISTS IN FIRST AID, SAFETY, SPILL & FIRE EQUIPMENT FOR OVER 50 YEARS.

Safety & **Technology**

To all our valued customers,

Many workplace incidents occur because workers weren't concentrating on the task at hand. So if you're a safety coordinator, the last thing you want your workers to do is use a device that causes distraction and loss of focus. But that's precisely what's happening. The culprit: iPods, MP3 players and other music playing devices. "The use of music devices is widespread and growing," says Brian G. Johnston, a Nova Scotia labour and employment lawyer. MP3 players are popular with workers, many of whom use their devices on the job.

What's the Danger?

Use of MP3 players among workers performing their jobs is on the rise. For example, one study found that 80% of technical and creative workers and about 40% of clerical workers spend more than 20% of their work day listening to music. And as young people—who seem almost physically attached to their MP3 players—enter the work force, use of these devices at work is only going to grow. So if you don't have issues with the use of MP3 players at your company now, you're likely to have them in the near future.

Is the use of MP3 players at work really such a bad thing? Some have argued that such use is actually a positive development. Studies have shown that listening to one's favourite music helps reduce stress and increase productivity. In addition, it can relieve workers of tedium and keep them alert.

But the use of MP3 players at work can also

be dangerous. Such use creates some serious safety hazards, particularly in industrial workplaces. Workers in these environments need to have their wits about them at all times. There's a big difference between an accountant's use of an MP3 player while working with spreadsheets and a manufacturing plant worker's use of one while operating a forklift.

In an industrial setting, MP3 players can create three kinds of safety hazards:

1. Workers using an MP3 player may be distracted and thus not focused on what they're doing. If a worker is operating equipment or machinery, or handling hazardous substances, his complete attention must be on the task at hand.
2. Workers using an MP3 player may be unable to hear alarms or other audio warning systems, shouts from co-workers, instructions from supervisors or other sounds in the workplace signifying a possible hazard. This problem is especially serious when workers use the very popular in-ear headphones, which almost completely shut out external sounds.
3. Much like jewellery, which is often banned in industrial workplaces, headphone cords and MP3 players themselves can get caught in machinery or interfere with the proper use of PPE.

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Are MP3 Players a Workplace Hazard?

MP3 Players & the Risk of Liability

There's a good case to be made for banning or limiting the use of MP3 players at work for liability reasons. No law—OHS or otherwise—specifically bars the use of MP3 players at work. There is, however, a safety regulation in Yukon that bars the use of “muff type hearing protectors or headsets which have been designed or modified to accept AM or FM radio or other music sources” [*Occupational Health Regulations*, Sec. 5(2)]. The OHS regulations of most provinces specifically require employers to ensure that certain powered mobile equipment be fitted with “audible” alarms that are activated when the equipment backs up. Alberta goes so far as to require the alarm to be “audible above the ambient noise level” [OHS Code, Sec. 267(l)(ii)].

But just because there are no legal requirements specifically banning MP3 players in workplaces doesn't mean you shouldn't institute such a ban at your facility. And, in fact, you may have to do so. Each province's OHS statute has what's commonly known as a “General Duty” clause—that is, language requiring employers to protect workers against known risks. It could be argued that the dangers posed by the use of MP3 players are a risk of which an employer is or should be aware. Consequently, the failure to limit the use of such devices could be considered a violation of the general duty clause and expose you to the risk of prosecution, fines and other penalties.

Why You Need a Written Policy

As a safety coordinator, you need to recognize the dangers posed by the use of MP3 players and take reasonable steps to control them. The way to do that is to formulate and implement a policy that deals specifically with this issue. You don't have to ban MP3 players to achieve this—after all, there are some legitimate benefits to such use—but employers do need to consider the use of MP3 players in

their particular workplace and balance any benefits from such use against any dangers such use poses.

Although several safety coordinators have banned or limited the use of MP3 players in their workplaces, surprisingly many do not have written rules or policies spelling out that ban. Why? Because having a written MP3 player use policy can help you prove due diligence if you're ever accused of an OHS violation because a worker was hurt or killed because he or a co-worker was using an MP3 player in the workplace.

What Your Policy Should Say

You should distribute your written policy to all workers and post it in the workplace. Your policy should do the following:

Explain the policy's purpose. It's a good idea to explain the rationale behind the policy to your workers. After all, workers might feel that listening to music while doing their job is a right that you have no business taking away. To reduce misunderstandings and increase the likelihood that the policy will be obeyed, you need to explain how the policy is necessary to promote safety.

Define devices broadly. Don't confine your ban or use restrictions to a particular device or technology. Say it applies to “music devices” and define that term broadly to include items such as iPods, MP3 players, CD players and radios with headphones.

Say who's covered. The policy should apply to all workers, contractors, consultants, temporary workers and other workers, including all personnel affiliated with third parties, who work at your site or facilities.

Spell out prohibited uses. Ban workers from using any music device in the workplace while they're working. And note that while in the workplace during work hours, workers are expected to focus on work.

Spell out permitted uses. A complete ban on the use of music devices in your workplace may not be necessary. For example, it may be reasonable to let workers use music devices only in the break room, lunch room or offices.

Note penalties for violations. Warn workers that if they violate the policy, they'll be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal, depending on the circumstances.

Conclusion

The MP3 player situation is a perfect example of why safety coordinators need to pay attention not only to what the laws say but also to what's actually going on at their workplaces. OHS laws were created at a time when nobody had ever heard of an MP3 player. But they've clearly emerged as a threat to safety. If you're not tuned in to the danger (so to speak) and capable of adjusting your policies, you're not doing all you can to ensure a safe workplace.



Smoke Alarms **Don't Age Well**

Even though Fire Prevention Month is over, preventing fires should always be on our minds. Don't forget to check your alarms!

Faithfully replace the batteries in smoke detectors every October and you can be assured they'll give you plenty of warning of a fire. Right?

Maybe not.

If smoke detectors themselves are 10 or more years old, they should be replaced too.

The reason? Aging smoke alarms don't operate as efficiently as when they were new, and they are often the source for nuisance alarms.

Did you know?

You should replace your smoke detector every 10 years?

Over time, the refraction chambers in smoke detectors become contaminated with dust and dirt. On older models, cleaning them is impossible. The likelihood of contamination increases with the number of people using the area, especially if they smoke indoors.

The same holds true for carbon monoxide detectors, which should also be replaced regularly.

(Source: Safety Talks, Oct 2008)

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR SMOKE ALARM!

Make sure you know how to look after your smoke detector

- Replace batteries yearly.
- Replace detectors that are older than 10 years.
- If you are unsure of the alarm's age, replace it.
- Units should be tested at least monthly using their test buttons - not open flame - and cleaned periodically.
- Each level of the home should be equipped with a smoke detector, which should also be located near all sleeping areas. In fact, the US National Fire Alarm Code requires that every sleeping room has its own smoke detector.
- Many smoke alarms activate prematurely because they are improperly positioned. Frequent false alarms will tempt many people to disable such alarms, and the consequences can be deadly. Consult an expert if you have any doubts about proper placement.
- When servicing an alarm, never use a stool, table or chair as a substitute for an appropriate ladder and always use wooden or fiberglass ladders when accessing hot-wired units.

(Source: Safety Talks, Oct 2008)

SMOKE DETECTOR FACTS

Simple steps like maintaining smoke alarms and replacing older ones help diminish the possibility of fire deaths in the home.

Smoke alarms in the home are largely responsible for the decreasing number of home fire deaths over the last few decades.

Eighty-five percent of fire deaths occur at home.

Most of these deaths occur while people are sleeping.

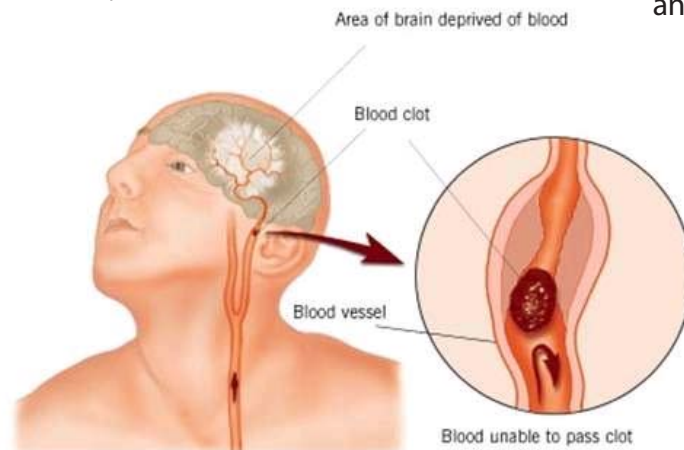
Half the deaths from fires in homes equipped with smoke detectors (about 94 percent have at least one detector) occur because batteries are dead, missing or disconnected.



Care Tips

The second leading cause of death in the world is due to Strokes or other Cerebrovascular Diseases.

(Source: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs310/en/>)



Another Sign of a Stroke: The Tongue

Another little known indicator of a potential stroke is the tongue. If you suspect someone might have suffered a stroke, ask him or her to stick out his or her tongue. If the tongue is 'crooked' (going to one side or the other) it is a sign that they may have suffered a stroke and you need to call emergency services right away.

Strokes and their Indicators

Knowing how to identify a stroke is half the battle - if you can spot a stroke, chances are you can help the victim, or get help, in a timely manner. Traditionally, strokes have three indicators, but more recently, a fourth indicator has come to light - the tongue. Please read these tips for identifying possible strokes and pass them along to your friends and family.

REMEMBER THIS:

When you think of a Stroke, think of the first three letters.

S.T.R.

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify and the results can be fatal if a stroke is not spotted early enough. By remembering S.T.R. you can help save someone's life.

S: Ask the individual to SMILE.

T: Ask the person to TALK and speak a simple sentence coherently, such as "It is sunny out today".

R: Ask him or her to RAISE both arms.

If the individual has trouble with any of these tasks, call 911 **IMMEDIATELY** and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.



Upcoming Industry

Events

December 2011

December 5 & 6 2011 Health and Safety Training for Managers and Supervisors
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS)
Hamilton, Ontario www.ccohs.ca

December 5 & 6 2011 The Canadian Electrical Code and Electrical Safety Conference Series
Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
Halifax, Nova Scotia www.csa.ca

December 6 & 7 2011 INFONEX Conference
Keeping Current on the Latest Developments in Occupational Health & Safety
Ottawa, Ontario www.infonex.ca/main/events.shtml

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