



NATIONAL HEARING CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**National Hearing Conservation Association Petitions OSHA to Lower Permissible Exposure Limits for Noise**

**Westminster, CO – November 2, 2009** – Citing the fact that nearly 22 million American workers are exposed to hazardous noise on a daily basis and that occupational hearing loss continues to plague industry, the National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA) has made a request to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to reduce the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for noise exposures.

"Noise-induced hearing loss is an insidious, permanent, and irreversible disease which has a tremendous negative impact on people's lives. The good news is that this disease is 100% preventable," said Rick Neitzel, PhD, CIH, NHCA President. "The bad news is that OSHA's 30-year-old noise exposure regulation is not consistent with current scientific knowledge, is not uniformly applied across all industries, and has not proven effective in preventing noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL)."

NHCA has requested that OSHA lower the PEL in the Occupation Noise Standard 29 CFR 1910.95 from 90 dBA to 85 dBA, and the Action Level from 85 to 80 dBA. Citing recent research by NIOSH and other organizations, American workers face a considerable risk of NIHL associated with long-term work at the current PEL of 90 dBA and a 5 dB time/intensity exchange rate. NHCA has also requested that the time/intensity exchange rate be reduced from 5 to 3 dB.

In the letter, NHCA also requests that OSHA extend the PEL to other industries, such as construction, agriculture, oil and gas drilling and servicing, and shipbuilding, that are not covered by the existing regulation. NHCA also asks OSHA to rescind a policy (OSHA Field Operations Manual, 3/2009) which permits exposures up to 100 dBA without requiring implementation of noise controls.

"Nearly every other nation on earth has adopted a more protective 85 dBA exposure limit - which means that U.S. workers have a substantially greater risk of developing noise-induced hearing loss than do the workers of almost every other nation," said Neitzel. "Also, workers in industries like construction, agriculture, and oil and gas drilling are currently not covered by an effective regulation, which is unacceptable, given the high levels of noise exposure associated with these industries."

"The National Hearing Conservation Association is a multidisciplinary organization committed to the *prevention* of hearing loss, and as such is uniquely positioned to advocate for contemporary U.S. noise exposure regulations," said Neitzel. "We feel that the proposed changes will help give American workers the protection that they deserve, and bring workplace noise regulations in the US in line with current scientific knowledge about noise and noise-induced hearing loss."



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NHCA's letter to OSHA can be found online at: <http://bit.ly/42a3GT>.

**About the National Hearing Conservation Association [NHCA]**

The mission of the National Hearing Conservation Association is to prevent hearing loss due to noise and other environmental factors in all sectors of society. NHCA provides networking, resources and professional development opportunities to improve skills, practices and services for over 600 members. NHCA's membership includes audiologists, researchers, students, industrial hygienists, educators, professional service organizations, safety professionals, medical professionals, engineers, audio professionals and others who have dedicated their work to the advancement of hearing loss prevention. For more information about the National Hearing Conservation Association, visit us online at [www.hearingconservation.org](http://www.hearingconservation.org).

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