Do Hearing Conservation Programs Really Work? Prove it!

This course explores the rationale for and demonstrated efficacy of hearing conservation programs (HCPs) for prevention of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL).

HCPs have been implemented in hundreds of thousands of companies throughout the world for over 40 years, and billions of dollars are spent annually to supply and enforce use of hearing protection and training for workers, and to conduct noise monitoring and annual audiograms. Yet, NIHL continues to be the most prevalent occupational disease in the industrial world.

This begets the question: Do hearing conservation programs really work? If so, how can efficacy be objectively demonstrated—and justified economically—in practice by companies and regulatory bodies?

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the basic mechanism of NIHL from cumulative noise exposure, and why hearing protective devices may not be fully effective in preventing disease
- Discuss the state of science on measuring the effectiveness of HCPs in preventing NIHL
- Review the efficacy of standard noise exposure measurements in predicting the risk of NIHL
- Recognize limitations of individual audiogram interpretations and standard threshold shifts, and discuss new statistical models for predicting hearing loss and measuring HCPs effectiveness

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