

# VOLTS News

## Valuing Our Lives Through Safety

October 2022—Volume 107

### VOLTS Data Report for September

Total Observations:	362
IPSC Emp. Contact Rate:	1.1
Total Safe Behaviors:	3,608
Total At-Risk Behaviors:	35

#### Top 3 Safe Behaviors

- Eyes and Face
- Eyes and Hands on Task
- Head

#### Top 3 At-Risk Exposures

- Hand
- Seat Belt
- Tool Use

### VOLTS Steering Committee Members

Casey Draper, Facilitator

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## Value Your Hearing by Casey Draper

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is a common problem that often develops with age or is caused by repeated exposure to loud noise. Hearing loss can be immediate or take a long time to become noticeable. According to the National Institute of Health, hearing loss is simply a result of sound signals not reaching the brain resulting in two types of hearing loss:

- Conductive hearing loss—when sounds are unable to pass from your outer ear to your inner ear
- Sensorineural hearing loss—caused by damage to sensitive hair cells inside the inner ear or damage to the auditory nerve

In today's environment, we experience many sounds on a regular basis. Typically, those sounds are heard at safe levels and don't damage our hearing. However, when sounds are too loud—even for a brief time—or when they are loud and long-lasting, they can be harmful. These sounds can cause damage to sensitive structures in the inner ear and cause temporary or permanent hearing loss. A recent study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), shows that 1 in 3 adults has some level of hearing loss. Some simple tools are listed below that NIOSH recommends to help determine if noise is at a hazardous level and hearing protection should be worn.

- If you must raise your voice to speak with someone at arm's length
- When speech around you sounds muffled or dull after you leave the noisy area
- If you have pain or ringing in your ears (called tinnitus) after you hear a noise; tinnitus can last for a few minutes or a few days



## Value Your Hearing—Casey Draper (cont.)

- **NIOSH Exposure Limit is 85 decibels for 8 hours per day**

### Choose The Hearing Protection That's Right for You

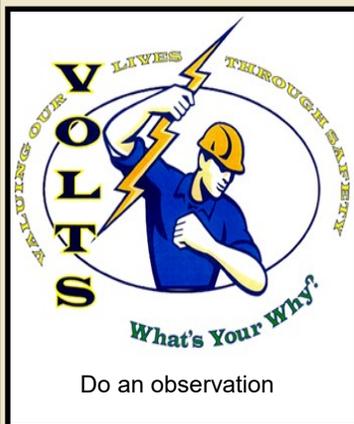
Whether helping others understand that NIHL can be immediate or take a long time to become noticeable, one thing is for certain—hearing loss is something you can prevent. Several types of hearing protection are fully stocked and available at IPSC. Choose expandable foam plugs, pre-molded reusable plugs, or ear muffs. The best hearing protection is comfortable, convenient, and whichever one you'll wear every time you're in a hazardous noise environment with hazardous noise. The hearing protection provided by IPSC is also encouraged to be used at home.

### The VOLTS Process Focuses on People First... Process Second

Using trend analysis—one of the four key elements of the VOLTS Behavior Accident Prevention Process (BAPP)—the VOLTS Steering Committee creates action plans to help control exposures for employees and improve the at-risk behaviors identified during previous months. Recently, using the VOLTS Adaptive BBS platform, a query of at-risk exposures was produced showing all hearing-related exposures over the past 24 months. The results of that query show that hearing was marked **safe** 3,645 times and **at-risk** only 43 times or only **1 percent at-risk**. Those behavioral statics—along with the historical success of IPSC's hearing conservation program—are something that should be celebrated by all!

### Noise-Canceling Hearing Protection...Does It Really Exist?

Noise-canceling headphones/earbuds being used as hearing protection is something disconcerting that's been identified in the Comments sections of recent observations. How effective are noise-canceling headphones or earbuds at protecting your hearing? Are they considered approved hearing protection? After talking with IPSC's Safety Specialist James Dean and



## VOLTS October Giveaway



Receive one entry toward a great fall season prize for each observation you complete and turn in during October.

Occupational Health Nurse Kolby Anderson and reading information from the Ear, Nose, & Throat Institute, I've learned that most noise-canceling headphones or earbuds lack a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) and are not considered by OSHA or NIOSH as approved hearing protection. The products marked with an NRR are tested by accredited laboratories and indicate the level of noise exposure that can be mitigated. In short, the higher the NRR value, the better the level of noise protection. Audio equipment that can test the NRR for each ear is now available in the health clinic. **For more information about hearing protection**, please contact or stop by the clinic and visit Kolby Andersen, our Occupational Health Nurse.

The VOLTS Steering Committee encourages you to value your hearing and not be fooled into thinking your ears are tough. Noise-induced hearing loss is usually slow and painless, but it is permanent. Please be proactive with your hearing protection and Value your Life through Safety by protecting your hearing for life.

For additional information on noise canceling headphones and earbuds, please follow this link: <https://soundproofcentral.com/noise-cancelling-headphones-osh-approved/>

### References

- National Institute of Health. (n.d.) *Noise-Induced Hearing Loss* [Factsheet] <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/noise-induced-hearing-loss>
- National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. (n.d.) *Choosing the hearing protection that's right for you* [Factsheet] <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/choose.html>