



Understanding the Dangers of Earbuds and Headphones

Earbuds and music headphones have become fixtures of everyday life, but on the job, they can pose serious safety hazards. What feels like a harmless habit can put you and the people around you at risk. When you cannot hear what is happening in your vicinity, you lose the ability to react to warnings, moving equipment and instructions from co-workers. The consequences can be severe. Knowing the risks is the first step to making smarter choices on the job.

Why Are Earbuds and Headphones a Safety Concern?

One of your most important safety tools is your situational awareness, which means paying attention to your surroundings and recognizing hazards before they become dangerous. Wearing earbuds or music headphones can reduce your ability to do that.

Potential risks include:

- Failing to notice moving vehicles or equipment
- Missing emergency alarms or evacuation announcements
- Lacking awareness of verbal warnings, instructions or communication from co-workers
- Becoming distracted and losing focus on tasks
- Increasing the chance of slips, trips, falls, struck-by incidents or caught-in hazards

- Making it harder to communicate effectively

Even in workplaces that seem relatively quiet, unexpected hazards can develop quickly. Maintaining full awareness of your surroundings helps protect both you and your co-workers.

Earbuds Are Not Hearing Protection

Consumer earbuds and music headphones are not a substitute for approved hearing protection. Whether noise-canceling or not, they can block warning sounds that workers depend on to stay safe.

If your job requires hearing protection, use only the equipment provided or approved by your employer. Workplace hearing protection, such as earplugs and earmuffs, is specifically designed and tested to reduce noise exposure and is assigned a noise reduction rating (NRR) based on laboratory testing. The NRR indicates how much noise reduction a device achieved under ideal lab conditions, and real-world protection is often significantly lower depending on fit and usage. Consumer earbuds and music headphones do not undergo this type of occupational safety testing and should never be used in place of required hearing protection.

Safety First

If you cannot fully hear and respond to your surroundings on the job, you may be putting yourself and others at risk. Remember, always follow your employer's rules regarding earbuds and headphones.

Making the Most of OSHA's Annual Safe and Sound Week

Safe and Sound Week is an [annual campaign](#) conducted by OSHA and other safety organizations. It will take place from Aug. 10-16 this year. This event aims to recognize the successes of workplace safety and health programs across the country and provide additional resources to help organizations and their employees kick-start or improve upon occupational safety and health initiatives. Nearly 4,000 organizations of all sizes and sectors register for this event each year.

According to OSHA, more than 5,000 workers are killed and 3.6 million are seriously injured on the job every year.

Considering these findings, it's crucial for organizations and workers alike to participate in Safe and Sound Week and dedicate this time to bolstering their overall safety awareness, thus reducing potential job hazards and minimizing the likelihood of future occupational injuries and fatalities.

How to Participate

As an employee, there are several steps you can take to make the most of Safe and Sound Week. During this event and beyond, make sure to follow these workplace safety practices:

- Attend workplace safety meetings and training sessions and carefully review related resources (e.g., flyers, manuals and handbooks).
- Uphold all workplace safety policies and procedures and encourage co-workers to do the same; don't rush through assignments. Your safety is always more important than the task at hand.
- Ensure you understand the risks associated with work tasks before starting. Wear the required

personal protective equipment (PPE) for these assignments.

- Share your safety knowledge with others. Especially if you are a more experienced employee and well-versed in common occupational hazards, providing tips to your shorter-tenured co-workers can help them gain valuable on-the-job insights.
- Communicate openly with your co-workers and management regarding any ongoing safety concerns you may have.
- Report all safety incidents, near-misses or unaddressed hazards to the proper channels immediately.

Promoting Safety Throughout the Year

Safe and Sound Week is more than a single week on the calendar; it's an opportunity to reinforce a year-round commitment to workplace safety. The statistics are concerning, but they are not inevitable. Most workplace injuries and fatalities are preventable through consistent awareness, communication and adherence to established safety protocols.

By actively participating in this year's event, employees and organizations alike can identify gaps in current practices, strengthen existing programs and cultivate a workplace culture where safety is second nature rather than an afterthought. Ultimately, protecting yourself and your co-workers requires ongoing effort. Be sure to use this week as a springboard toward safer habits that last all year.

Reach out to your supervisor for additional workplace safety resources.



Live Well, Work Well

August 2026

5 Ways to Sleep Better in the Summer

A good night's sleep is crucial for overall health and well-being, but as the days grow longer and temperatures rise, many people find falling and staying asleep increasingly difficult. The increase in daylight hours delays your body's production of melatonin, which promotes sleep. This impacts your circadian rhythm, the body's internal clock that regulates your sleep-wake cycle. The longer summer days tell your body to stay awake longer and may make it more difficult for you to fall asleep.

Hot weather can also influence sleep patterns by raising your body temperature. This moves your body into a heightened state of awareness, preventing you from falling asleep or waking you up. In addition, people may have busy social calendars, further interfering with their regular sleep schedules. All these disruptions can make it challenging to get restful sleep during the summer.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine found that 1 in 3 people say they sleep less in the summer.

Summer sleep disturbances can be frustrating, but try these five tips to improve your sleep quality:

1. **Keep a consistent schedule.** Late nights can happen in the summer, but try to stick to a regular and consistent sleep schedule to regulate your circadian rhythm.
2. **Create a cool sleep environment.** Keep your bedroom cool with fans and air conditioning, or prop doors and windows open. The best temperature for sleep is 65 degrees Fahrenheit.
3. **Use lightweight fabrics.** Opt for lightweight and moisture-wicking pajamas and bedding. Materials like cotton, linen, bamboo and silk can help you stay comfortable.
4. **Try a sleep mask.** Longer daylight hours can disrupt your sleep cycle, so wearing a sleep mask can help darken the room. Experts advise against blackout curtains; allowing some light alerts your body that the day is coming.
5. **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated in the heat, but avoid large amounts right before bed to prevent waking up for bathroom trips.

Understanding how summer's long days, high temperatures and lifestyle changes can affect your sleep can allow you to take action to improve your slumber. If you have questions or concerns about your sleep quality, contact your doctor.

Well-being Tips for Summer Festivals and Fairs

With sunny days, seasonal breaks and time off, summer is a popular time for public outdoor events. Festivals and fairs carry several health and safety risks (e.g., heat-related illness, sun exposure and dehydration), as well as crowd safety hazards and foodborne illness from vendors. Consider these tips to stay healthy and safe at festivals and fairs:

- **Plan ahead.** Check the weather to know how to dress, and familiarize yourself with the venue layout so you can quickly find exits, first-aid stations and water refill points. Stick with your group and set a meet-up plan in case you get separated.
- **Check event policies.** Review the venue's website for rules on bags, water bottles, sunscreen containers and umbrellas.
- **Stay cool and hydrate.** Wear light, breathable clothing, drink water throughout the day and take shade breaks to cool down.

- **Use sun protection.** Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen and reapply every two hours. Consider wearing a hat or sunglasses for extra protection.
- **Protect your hearing.** Use earplugs or noise-canceling headphones in loud areas to reduce hearing damage.
- **Prioritize your personal safety.** Use anti-theft bags, keep valuables close and stay aware of your surroundings to navigate crowds and avoid hazards.
- **Eat and drink responsibly.** Choose vendors with clean setups and proper food safety equipment, or eat beforehand or pack your own food if allowed. If drinking alcohol or caffeine, balance it with water to avoid worsening dehydration or heat illness.

Prioritizing your health and safety at festivals and fairs can help you minimize risks and maximize fun.

Are You Up to Date On Your Vaccines?

Every August, National Immunization Awareness Month promotes the importance of immunizations at all life stages. Vaccination protects against severe illnesses and complications of vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, polio, hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis and COVID-19.

Vaccinations are so vital that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers immunization schedules to help you understand if you or others are up to date on shots:

- [Infants and children](#) (birth to age 6)
- [Preteens and teens](#) (ages 7-18)

- [Adults](#) (ages 19 and older)
- [Pregnant people](#) (before, during and after pregnancy)

Getting vaccines at the recommended time is the best way to protect against serious diseases. If you're behind on routine vaccinations, consider getting vaccinated as soon as possible. Your doctor can offer personalized guidance and provide more information about vaccines. Flu season is right around the corner, so pharmacies and clinics may soon begin getting this year's shots in.