

A Practical Approach Towards Establishing a Sustainable Personal Hearing Protection Program in Upstream Oil and Gas Company

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ABSTRACT

A rise in the number of reporting of occupational noise-related illness cases since 2020 has prompted multiple investigations to be conducted. This has led to the identification of several gaps in existing practices that were found to contribute to increased noise exposure risks and hearing disorders among site personnel. This paper aims to share how lessons learnt from incident investigations have brought about a deeper understanding of the implementation issues on the ground which led to improvement in the practices related to the use of personal hearing protection (PHP). Managing noise risks is one of the important aspects of the Company's established Hearing Conservation program. While engineering controls placed a higher rank in the hierarchy of controls, thus more effective, the use of PHP is always deemed necessary to further reduce any residual risk. The investigations revealed specific areas to be improved related to ineffective selection and donning of PHP, and personnel competency in applying the work duration limit. To address these gaps, efforts were initiated to establish a Company requirement for personnel to use a PHP with a minimum noise reduction rating, a clear process in the selection of the right PHP and application of work duration limit, enhancement in training related to donning of ear plugs, and use of ear fit test for educational purpose. Effective use of the correct PHP is one of the many aspects of a Hearing Conservation program. Other areas are equally important to be addressed to effectively manage noise risks and potentially reduce occupational noise-related illness cases in the long run.

Keywords: Sustainable, noise, risk, hearing, personal hearing protection, PHP
