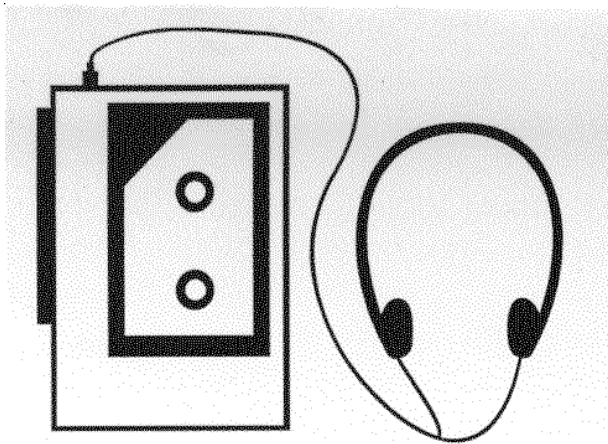


Work **Safe!** Bulletin

USE OF PORTABLE RADIO/TAPE/CD PLAYERS WITH EARPHONES: A FACTOR IN WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS

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The use of a portable entertainment unit with earphones or a headset device restricting a worker's ability to hear surrounding sounds can be very hazardous. This is especially true where the user is working around moving equipment or in circumstances where it is essential that a worker is able to hear warning sounds. It's also hazardous at any job site where general alertness and concentration is compromised by using such devices.



A recent fatality in Manitoba resulted when a worker using such an entertainment unit with headset was run over by a grader at a construction site. An investigation by officers from the Workplace Safety and Health Branch determined that the entertainment device "could have limited the worker's ability to hear the grader approaching."

Employers and supervisors are obligated to keep workers out of hazardous situations, and thus it is

recommended the use of these devices be restricted by the employer. A risk assessment should be conducted to determine the potential hazards of wearing a sound generating headset.

For example, a worker on a construction site in an area where heavy mobile equipment is being operated, would be at high risk of being involved in an accident and use of such entertainment devices should not be allowed on the job.

Examples of cautionary circumstances include:

- THE NEED TO BE ALERTED to dangerous surrounding conditions
- RECEIVING VERBAL DIRECTION and signals from other workers at the workplace
- ANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCE where the wearing of such a device will impair the ability of a worker to hear necessary sounds to ensure the worker's own safety and health, as well as that of co-workers.

There may be other circumstances where hazards are controlled, or the potential for injury is very low. If there is a request to use a sound generating headset at work, then the safety and health committee should be consulted and the issue evaluated.