Scottish Construction Safety Group

Minutes of the meeting of 22nd of April 2021

Robert Bradford introduced Chris Steel the HSE noise and vibration specialist, who was giving a presentation on hearing protection in the construction industry focussing on active hearing protection. The full presentation can be found on the Group website.

Active hearing protection can be fitted to muffs and plugs and mainly has electronics that filter the noise to allow the wearer to hear others speaking to them. These filters are especially useful when noise is variable and they stop the need for wearers to remove hearing protection when talking to others. They will also allow wearers to identify sounds such as emergency warnings which will have been identified in the risk assessment. They also solve the problem of overprotection. There is an onus on the employer to ensure that the hearing protection is in good condition with systems in place to ensure that checks are carried out regularly by the employer and user. Things to look for include –

- battery condition,
- overall condition of the hearing protection (the cost of active hearing protection might encourage some employers to make users wear them in poor condition with botched repairs)
- fit – check seal, tension in headbands
- cleanliness (especially important for in ear devices)

The employer also has to check that the hearing protection is being worn correctly e.g. under hoods not over them.

HSE has a new noise calculator on their website which explains the SNR, HML and octave band analysis methods for calculating the hearing protection provided by devices. The HSE has also provided typical noise levels for some common tasks.

The design stage is where the biggest improvements can be made to noise, dust and vibration levels in construction.

The next meeting will be on the 20th of May when Dave Charnock Principal Inspector of the HSE will give a presentation via Teams on the HSE workplan for the coming year as well as answering questions about the HSE. Connection details can be found on the SCSG web page.

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