

THE HANNON GROUP, LLC



NIOSH – Moderator’s Guide

Construction Workers Focus Groups

November 6, 2019

I. Background on Project, Conversation Guidelines, and Brief Introductions (5 minutes)

1. Explanation of the focus group format
 - a) Explanation of the focus group format
 - b) No wrong answers, just looking for the expression of open and honest opinions
 - c) Role of the moderator/facilitate an active and productive discussion
 - d) Reserve the right to move the conversation along/call on those who are being quiet/important that everyone participate
 - e) No cross-talking/please speak one at a time (so everyone has the opportunity to express their opinions)/good volume so I can hear you.
 - f) Guarantee of Privacy (names not used in the reports, only general descriptors)
 - g) Participation is voluntary – you are free to decline to answer any question that you do not want to answer and to leave this room at any point, without any penalty
 - h) If applicable: There are observers in the back room, behind the one-way mirror, and folks on telephone lines observing the discussion
 - i) Focus group recorded for analysis purposes only—do I have your permission to audio-record this discussion?
 - j) Any questions before we begin?
2. Brief Introductions

II. Personal Perceptions/Experiences with Construction Site Noise Levels (30 minutes)

3. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “not at all” and 10 being “a great deal,” how concerned are you about hearing loss? [include question on flip chart]
4. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “not at all” and 10 being “a great deal,” how concerned are you about hearing loss *caused by noise exposure at construction sites*? [include question on flip chart]

Public reporting burden of this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to - CDC/ATSDR Reports Clearance Officer; 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS D-74, Atlanta, Georgia 30333 ATTN: PRA (0920-1154).

5. How does noise at the worksite compare with other problems at work?
6. Again, on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “very poor” and 10 being “excellent,” how would you rate the quality of your hearing? [include question on flip chart]
7. How many of you have had your hearing tested recently (within the last two years)? What was that experience like?

[For those who have had their hearing tested recently] Do you have your hearing tested regularly? How often? Who has done this testing (selecting an audiologist on your own or via work)? Who pays for it? What do you think about the results? What have you done, if anything, about the results? Have you noticed any changes in your hearing over the years? How so?

Today, I would like to spend some time exploring your thoughts on noise at your place of work: construction sites.

8. How would you describe noise levels at construction sites? How else?
9. Would you say high levels of noise at construction sites are just “a part of the job” or are they something that can be improved? How can noise levels be improved? [Listen for: right equipment, specific practices. Ask to define/specify]
10. What would make it easier to have the “right” equipment or “right” practices?
11. What makes it difficult to have the “right” equipment or “right” practices?
12. How do noise levels at construction sites make it difficult to communicate with other workers? How frequently does this occur?
13. How do typical noise levels at construction sites interfere with your ability to do your job? How frequently does this occur?
14. Describe how you talk with your coworkers about noise levels at construction sites. What do you talk about? What specific topics come up? What else?
15. Talk about how noise levels at construction sites may pose health risks for construction workers.
16. Talk about noise levels at construction sites and the possibility of that noise leading to hearing loss for some construction workers. Have you personally experienced this? Do you know of other coworkers who have experienced this? Have you heard about that happening? What happened?
17. What type of construction site activities tend to be loudest? Why are they the loudest? What activities tend to be the loudest at the construction sites at which you work?
18. What specific tools, equipment, or other machinery used at construction sites tend to be loudest? How so? What tools, equipment, or other machinery tends to be the loudest at the construction sites at which you work?
19. Thinking about your experience both on and off work sites:

- a) Do you sometimes have a hard time hearing people in groups or meetings or if there is background noise? [Make sure the participant is talking about their own experiences, not others' experiences with all of these questions.]
- b) Do people sound as if they are mumbling?
- c) Do you have to ask people to repeat what they say?
- d) Do you have trouble understanding others on the telephone?
- e) Do you have ringing or noises in one or both ears?
- f) Do you have trouble hearing back-up alarms or the ringing of a cell phone?

III. Protecting Hearing – Steps (20 minutes)

- 20. What steps do you take to protect your hearing while on construction sites? Anything else?
- 21. How many of you use hearing protection devices while on construction sites [count show of hands]? If so, what types of hearing-focused Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) better known as hearing protection devices do you use (e.g., earmuffs, foam ear plugs, performed plugs, canal caps, other, etc...)? What else? Do they fit properly or no? Do you know if they fit properly? Do you feel as though you received the right training to use the devices as intended? How so? How could they be improved?
- 22. Beyond using specific devices, what other activities or practices that are intended to help you protect your hearing at work do you engage in? How well do they work? How could they be improved?
- 23. Have you used *equipment or tools* that are quieter? What do you think about quieter equipment? Do you notice the difference in noise levels? Do you think they help construction worker protect their hearing? Are there any downsides to using quieter equipment? What are they? [For those that haven't used this kind of quieter equipment or tools, how interested are you in trying these out?]
- 24. Do you know what safe job site sounds levels (decibel levels) are [count show of hands]? How did you come across that information?
- 25. What kinds of meetings or training sessions about noise levels and how best to deal with them do your employers/managers conduct? What is discussed at these meetings? How productive are these meetings? How could they be more productive in terms of helping construction workers like you protect their hearing?
- 26. Have you or other construction workers you know asked your employers/managers for help in improving noise levels at job sites? What kinds of things have you asked for? Did your employers/managers provide you any new equipment or changes in how tasks are done to help with reducing noise? Have these changes been helpful?
- 27. What are some challenges or barriers that may prevent construction workers like you from being able to use hearing protection devices or engage in other workplace practices that might help protect your hearing?

28. What are some challenges or barriers that may prevent your employers or others in management roles from helping ensure that their workers' hearing is protected (to the greatest extent possible)?
29. What equipment or practices have been most effective at improving noise levels on job sites? How so? Anything else?
30. What would encourage you to adopt practices that help improve noise levels and/or protect your hearing or the hearing of others at construction sites? How so? Anything else?
31. What are your thoughts on penalties for construction workers who don't follow proper noise reduction practices and/or put their hearing or the hearing of others at construction sites at risk?
32. What are your thoughts on penalties for construction companies/employers/contractors who don't implement and enforce noise reduction practices and/or modify the built environment so that it is quieter?

IV. Long-Term Impact of Noise (8 minutes)

Allow me to provide you with some additional information about noise and its impact on hearing.

33. 51% of all construction workers have been exposed to hazardous noise and 25% of noise-tested construction workers have a hearing impairment that impacts their day-to-day activities [hand this information out on a piece of paper for each participant to read along with the moderator] Have you heard this information before? What do you think about that? How credible is this information to you? How memorable is it? How likely is this information to influence what you do and do not do at the worksite? How likely is this information to influence what employers/managers do and do not do?
34. High noise levels can lead to permanent hearing loss, which is a loss that cannot be cured or reversed. Have you heard this information before? What do you think about that? How credible is this information to you? How memorable is it? How likely is this information to influence what you do and do not do at the worksite? How likely is this information to influence what employers/managers do and do not do?
35. Another study revealed that workers persistently exposed to excessive workplace-related noise may be "two-to-three times more likely to suffer from serious heart disease than workers who were not exposed." [hand this information out on a piece of paper for each participant to read along with the moderator] Have you heard this information before? What do you think about that? How credible is this information to you? How memorable is it? How likely is this information to influence what you do and do not do at the worksite? How likely is this information to influence what employers/managers do and do not do?
36. What do you enjoy the most through your hearing? What would you miss the most if you lost your hearing? How so? Anything else?

V. Communicating about Hearing Loss and Hearing Protection (25 minutes)

37. How do you currently get information about workplace-related noise and hearing issues? If you haven't sought out this kind of information before why not and where would you turn to get this kind of information? How useful is that information for you? How convenient is that information for you?
38. What is the best way for you to receive information about workplace-related noise and hearing issues? In what form(s)/formats? What would make that a particularly effective way (communication channel) of providing you with information?
39. What are some other ways you would prefer to receive information about workplace-related noise and hearing issues? How would those ways be effective?
40. I would like to explore some specific ways that information on hearing health and construction site noise levels can be delivered to construction workers. For each, thinking about how you prefer to receive information, I would like to understand your thoughts on how effective they could be: [include the list below on a flip chart]
- a. Posters/signs Where is the best location (construction sites, equipment rental vendors, building permit offices, lumberyards or other supply companies) and why? What size? Laminated? Able to be customized?
 - b. One-page pamphlet/fact sheets/cards (for most of the below, distributed how? By whom?)
 - c. Newsletters
 - d. Brochures/booklets
 - e. Instructional videos
 - f. CDs/DVDs
 - g. Calendars/coffee mugs
 - h. Social media (please specify)
 - i. Websites (please specify)
 - j. Other (specify, e.g., TV, radio, in-person, magazines, newspapers, information mailed to home)
41. What do you recommend the focus of the content/information be in such materials? What information would be most helpful for you? What would be memorable? Credible? Compelling?
42. What would be your preferred approach/format for such materials? Facts? Real-life stories? Testimonies? Something else? How so?
43. What would be your preferred tone of such materials? Serious? Humorous? Focused on risks? Focused on benefits of employing proper devices/practices? Something else?
44. What individuals, or organizations, or news sources do you most trust when it comes to providing accurate, timely, information on workplace-related noise and hearing issues? Why that/those people/groups/organizations? What about them makes them credible to you? Anyone else? How so?

45. Thinking about what we discussed today, on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “not at all” and 10 being “a great deal,” how concerned are you about hearing loss? [include question on flip chart]
 46. Again, thinking about what we discussed today, on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “not at all” and 10 being “a great deal,” how concerned are you about hearing loss *caused by noise exposure at construction sites*? [include question on flip chart]
 47. What would motivate you the most to actively engage in practices to protect your hearing?
- VI. Denouement and Conclusion (2 minutes)**
48. Is there anything else you would like to say about hearing health and noise levels at construction sites, bearing in mind the work you do?

Thank you very much for your time.