

CONSTRUCTION BLOG

CONSTRUCTION ALERT: OSHA update - Say No to Earbuds

AUTHOR: TIMM SCHOWALTER

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a new guidance letter that indicates it may be legal, but not generally advisable, for workers to use headphones to listen to music on a construction sites. OSHA acknowledged that there is no specific OSHA regulation that prohibits the use of headphones on a construction site. However, OSHA made it clear that construction employers cannot avoid citations for resulting hazards. OSHA warned, "Listening to music may produce a safety hazard by masking environmental sounds that need to be heard, especially on active construction sites where attention to moving equipment, heavy machinery, vehicle traffic, and safety warning signals may be compromised."

Employer Take Away: It is important for workers to be able to hear equipment starting and stopping, warnings, alarms, and verbal directions from co-workers and supervisors. An employer that allows construction workers to listen to music using headphones or earbuds could be cited under the "general duty clause" that requires employers to provide a workplace that is free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious harm to employees. Construction employers who allow employees to use headphones should conduct and document a worksite safety assessment to ensure the employees are able to continue to perform their job duties in a safe manner without regard to listening to music.