

## TOOLBOX TALK

# Listening for Warning Signs

Worksites are full of a wide range of sounds and noises. Every noise comes from someone operating a tool, using equipment, or from a machine in motion. Over time, these sounds can fade into the background.

However, when sounds blend in as background noise, important alerts or distress signals might be ignored, mistaken for routine activity. Your safety, the wellbeing of others, and the durability of machines rely on your ability to listen closely and notice signs of danger or warnings.

### *Horns are a Warning Device*

The purpose of a horn at equipment is to alert employees to potential hazards, such as the machine moving, the operator's work being performed, or any other impending dangers.

Using a horn or shouting without necessity can result in confusing warnings. Unwarranted yelling or horn signals may alarm individuals and divert their attention from important tasks as they assess potential danger. Repeated false alarms can also diminish the effectiveness of these signals in genuine emergencies, increasing the risk that critical alerts will be disregarded.

### **Actions that Decrease Listening Safety**

- Too much focus on a direct task, not paying attention to or listening to the big picture.
- Lack of sleep
- Complacency
- Horn blowing for no reason
- Random yelling

### **How To Improve Listening Habits**

- Become acquainted with the proper operational sounds of equipment and tools. Ask questions about the noises of the jobsite.
- Stay alert
- When you hear an unusual sound or voice STOP!! Take time to Investigate

Though seeing danger may be simpler than hearing it, your ears pick up warning signals from all directions, unlike your eyes, which only see where you look. Stay alert to unusual sounds or voices; investigate them and seek clarification if needed. Always pay attention to your plant ears.

### *Questions to ask your team:*

*When are times an operator should sound a horn?*

*Why is it important to listen to what is going on around you?*