

3M "Hearing Pledge" Aims to Silence World's Most Common Sensory Disability

To prevent noise-induced hearing loss, 3M encourages workers to wear hearing protection when exposed to sound levels higher than 85 decibels

For an estimated 275 million people around the world, “What?” is an all too common question. That’s because these individuals have disabling hearing loss, many due to excessive noise both on and off the job¹.

“Hearing loss is the number one sensory disability in the world – yet it is also one of the most preventable,” said Laurie Wells, senior acoustics specialist, 3M.

To help people avoid noise-induced hearing loss, [3M](#) has launched a social campaign called the “[Hearing Pledge](#),” which aims to educate people on how to detect and help protect them from hazardous noise. By taking the pledge at www.hearingpledge.com, people can commit to wearing hearing protection when exposed to noise in excess of 85 decibels (dB). Prolonged exposure to sounds louder than 85 dB can damage your ears and lead to permanent hearing loss and other symptoms. People can pledge and also share the information and the pledge site with friends and family. Those who pledge can opt to enter into a giveaway, with prizes such as an iPod touch® mobile digital device and sound control earbuds.

Noise and other sounds that exceed 85 dB come from numerous activities, like at work in a noisy assembly line or warehouse; or at home when mowing the lawn, using power tools or listening to music; or when watching fireworks or attending a football game. For many people, constant exposure to excessive noise is part of the job description. A few workplace environments where hazardous noise is common include manufacturing, assembly, farming, military, oil and gas, transportation, entertainment, mining and construction sites.

“Many workers choose to go without hearing protection because of discomfort or inconvenience,” said Wells. “This can lead to permanent hearing loss, as well tinnitus – constant ringing, buzzing or whistling in the ear – and a myriad of other effects like sleep disturbance, hypertension, anxiety and stress. That’s why raising awareness of the hearing loss epidemic and preventative measures is so important.”

BASF, the world’s leading chemical company, agrees. Through a wellness campaign called “Soundcheck 2012,” BASF is educating its employees on the detrimental effects of excessive noise. As part of this initiative, BASF enlisted 3M’s HearForce Hearing Conservation trainers to educate 2,640 employees about hearing loss at 37 BASF sites in the U.S.

“Hearing damage can affect our employees at work and at home so we’re making sure they understand the risks, get the appropriate hearing protection, and are committed to using it whenever life gets too loud,” said Dr. Patrick Conner, BASF’s Vice President of Corporate Medical.

About 3M

3M captures the spark of new ideas and transforms them into thousands of ingenious products. Our culture of creative collaboration inspires a never-ending stream of powerful technologies that makes life better. 3M is the innovation company that never stops inventing. With \$30 billion in sales, 3M employs about 84,000 people worldwide and has operations in more than 65 countries. For more information, visit www.3M.com or follow @3MNews on Twitter.

About 3M Personal Safety

3M offers a comprehensive, diverse portfolio of Personal Safety solutions providing respiratory protection,

hearing protection, fall protection, reflective materials for high visibility apparel, protective clothing, protective eyewear, head and face protection, welding helmets, and other adjacent products and solutions such as tactical safety equipment, detection, monitoring equipment, active communications equipment and compliance management. In 2012, 3M celebrated 40 years of occupational health & safety leadership – recognizing the company's respiratory and hearing protection solutions introduced in 1972. Visit www.3M.com/PPESafety.

About BASF – The Chemical Company

BASF Corporation, headquartered in Florham Park, New Jersey, is the North American affiliate of BASF SE, Ludwigshafen, Germany. BASF has more than 16,000 employees in North America, and had sales of \$20 billion in 2011. For more information about BASF's North American operations, visit www.basf.us.

BASF is the world's leading chemical company: The Chemical Company. Its portfolio ranges from chemicals, plastics, performance products and crop protection products to oil and gas. We combine economic success, social responsibility and environmental protection. Through science and innovation we enable our customers in almost all industries to meet the current and future needs of society. Our products and system solutions contribute to conserving resources, ensuring healthy food and nutrition and helping to improve the quality of life. We have summed up this contribution in our corporate purpose: We create chemistry for a sustainable future. BASF posted sales of about €73.5 billion in 2011 and had more than 111,000 employees as of the end of the year. Further information on BASF is available on the Internet at www.basf.com.

For more information:

Take the Hearing Pledge www.hearingpledge.com

Check out the latest industry statistics on hearing loss and the employment of people with disabilities: <https://www.box.com/s/38174a762f1a09f95763>

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¹ *World Health Organization. (2012, March 3). Media center. International Day for Ear and Hearing. Retrieved March 22, 2012, from http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/annual/ear_hearing_day/en/index.html*

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