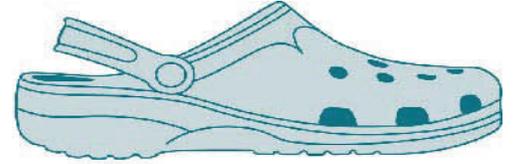


Protect Your Feet



Footwear at Work

It is probably no surprise that people want to wear Crocs (or similar footwear) in the workplace – they're comfortable, durable, affordable, and trendy. Lately, they seem to be worn by everyone, everywhere. However, healthcare and research/laboratory settings are very different from the beach, the garden, or the supermarket.



When choosing the right footwear for work, you should consider the environment and circumstances that surround you in the workplace. Healthcare and research settings, such as hospitals and labs, hold many potential risks and dangers for both workers and patients. Wearing proper footwear is essential to ensure you remain safe. As comfortable as Crocs may be, there are two major areas of concern regarding wearing them in healthcare: support and protection.



By design, Crocs are
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Shared Success

The following are interesting progress notes from SafetyTeam members' activities:

- The Scappoose clinic enjoyed fire extinguisher training that was put on by the Scappoose Fire Department. Most of the clinic was able to put out an actual fire with an extinguisher!
- A SafetyTeam member proactively notified Tri-Met about a potentially unsafe bus stop off of Macadam. Proactive alerts can improve safety and prevent accidents.
- On the 12th floor of CHH, the glass doors leading into the employee-only area of the School of Pharmacy were so clean, that visitors and children often walked right into them! Opaque film was installed to help prevent this from happening.
- A concern was raised about streetcar safety where the streetcar and tram interface at the CHH building. This issue was referred to the Safety Committee for discussion.

Please continue to submit your monthly member update forms so that your safety concerns continue to be addressed.

Good Work Everyone!



Topic of the Month

This month's specialized training topic is a discussion of **Noise in the Workplace**.



Is noise bad?

Noise-induced hearing loss is the term for hearing damaged by excessive noise - above 85 decibels (dB), averaged over an eight-hour period.

Most of us take hearing for granted - when we go home at the end of a workday and when we get up in the morning we expect to hear well. When noise is too loud, however, it can damage the sensitive hair cells in your inner ear. As the number of damaged hair cells increases, your brain receives fewer impulses to interpret as sound. As you damage hair cells, you damage hearing.

What are the symptoms?

People differ in their sensitivity to noise and there's no way to determine who is most at risk for hearing damage. Factors such as sound intensity, frequency, and exposure time, all play a role in determining whether noise is harmful or just annoying.

You should consider your hearing at risk, however, if noise affects you in one of the following ways:

- Normal conversation is difficult; you have to shout above the noise to make yourself heard.
- You have ringing in your ears for several hours after exposure to noise.
- You have difficulty hearing normal sounds for several hours after exposure to noise.



How to control exposure

Before you can control workplace noise, you need to determine its source, who's affected by it, how the noise is reaching them (the noise path), and the noise levels (at the source and at the listeners). Special instruments - a **sound-level meter** and a **dosimeter** - record sound and exposure levels. You can contact Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (503 494-0215) to conduct a **sound survey** of your workplace. Once you understand the noise problem, you can make an informed decision about how to control it.

Tools

Critical noise-control tools include the following:

- **Exposure monitoring:** gives you information to determine if individual employees are exposed to hazardous noise levels. Special instruments are used to assess conditions;
- **Audiometric testing:** determines whether an employee's hearing is stable or getting worse over time. Employee Health performs and keeps records of these.
- **Engineering controls:** controls noise at its source so that it's no longer hazardous. These include reductions in noise produced at the source or altering its travel path.
- **Administrative controls:** controls noise by managing employee activities to reduce their exposures.
- **Hearing protection:** Earmuffs and ear plugs; they reduce noise by decreasing the intensity of sound that reaches the eardrum. Make sure that you use the right tool for the job!

Questions about noise?

503 494-7795

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meant to be easy to put on and take off. As a result, most models feature a simple, movable strap around the ankle. This does not provide sufficient ankle support, particularly considering that healthcare workers may routinely be tasked with lifting and moving patients, equipment, etc; and most employees must traverse our very hilly, and sometimes awkward sidewalks and pathways. Also, the level of arch support provided may not be adequate for workers working long shifts on their feet.

One of the most noticeable elements of most Crocs is the ventilation. Ventilation holes throughout the shoe permit feet to stay cool. In healthcare and research settings, however, it is not difficult to see how this could be a hazard. Shoes that do not fully cover the feet do not protect against chemical or biological exposures and spills. The open-ended heels of the shoes also leave feet susceptible to injury from wheelchairs or other equipment.

If you like the fit of Crocs or similar shoes, companies have now introduced several versions that do not have holes, but are solid on the top and sides. These are much better suited for healthcare and research lab environments.



Wearing holey Crocs (or similar shoes) in many work areas at OHSU present many risks, and it is recommended that you do not wear them for work.

Effective Communication

"How could they miss my point so completely?" you wonder. It's a frustrating experience to be misunderstood. Yet it seems to be a fact of life that people misunderstand each other. How can you make yourself clear?

1. **Start slow.** Start with simple ideas, then move into more complex instructions. Take it step by step, giving reasons for your instructions. When workers understand why they are doing a job they do it more willingly. Analyze your audience for the proper technique needed to get your message across.
2. **Too much at once?** If you're explaining something complicated, slow down. On the other hand, don't go so slowly that minds wander. Everyone has a different rhythm, so try to tune into it.
3. **Encourage questions.** Just because questions aren't asked, doesn't mean they don't exist. People don't like to admit lack of understanding. Ask whether you've gotten your point across! If there are still no questions, turn the tables. Survey the group to be sure they understand. Be careful not to make your questions sound like an interrogation. Employees freeze up when this happens. Be gentle, but persistent.
4. **Work to build a climate of trust.** Employees will open up if they trust you, but they need to know you won't embarrass them or use what they say against them. Avoid talking to one employee about another. Don't ask for input if you don't want it or won't consider acting on it.
5. **Use words your listener understands.** Keep in mind the different backgrounds of employees (education, age, work experience). Use words the person is familiar with, and avoid confusing acronyms and slang.
6. **Try to hold conversations where your people are comfortable.** Workers get embarrassed if they feel a personal conversation can be overheard by other employees. If the subject is personal, find a private place.

