What you need to know about metal detectable earplugs

Hearing protection in food manufacturing

Nearly every food manufacturing facility produces sound. From manufacturing plants that include beverage processing, food processing, food packing, or even pharmaceutical manufacturing, hearing protection is required for all employees working in hazardous noise over 85 dB (as per CSA Hearing Protection Standard Z94.2).

Providing proper hearing protection for employees can be challenging especially when this type of facility requires strict health, sanitation and safety requirements. This is why metal detectable earplugs can be the ideal method of hearing protection in food manufacturing facilities—and they offer more than just hearing protection.

Why is using metal detectable earplugs important?

In any food manufacturing facility, preventing food contamination is a top priority. If a stray earplug made its way into a food source, a company’s reputation could be damaged and they could be faced with a public relations nightmare.

Metal detectable earplugs help prevent contamination of products in case an earplug accidentally gets into food production. Many food manufacturing facilities use metal detecting machines that test outgoing product for metal and are sensitive enough to detect a metal detectable earplug that has accidentally made its way into the food stream. Metal detectable earplugs are one of the easiest ways to help ensure that this type of non-food ingredient never makes its way into a food source.
What you need to know about metal detectable earplugs

Metal detectable earplugs are a specialized type of earplug that contain a small metal component within them. All 3M™ Metal Detectable Earplugs contain a small stainless steel ball bearing located in the earplug or its stem.

What many people don’t know is that certain types of 3M metal detectable earplugs contain metal in the cords. For safety reasons, earplugs and the cord that attaches them are designed to come apart easily. If the earplugs were separated from their cord, there is a high chance that the earplugs would be detected and removed. But unless the cord is also metal detectable, it may not be found.

Most metal detectable earplugs have the colour blue incorporated in them. Blue is used because it is a contrasting colour to most food products and is easily seen by the human eye. 3M metal detectable earplugs all have blue cords to ensure higher visibility.

Blue colour

Stainless steel ball bearing

Metal particles

Soft, pliable foam

to contrast against most foods

for metal detectability located inside both earplugs

for metal detectability located in the cord

offers comfort for wearing over an extended period of time
How metal detectable earplugs serve a dual purpose

Employee productivity is crucial to any company’s success. When employees wear earplugs that fit properly:

1. they are less likely to remove the earplugs due to discomfort
2. it is less likely for the earplugs to accidentally contaminate food

This is why it is so important for employees to have a selection of metal detectable earplugs that fit properly, feel comfortable and provide the right level of protection (attenuation). This decreases the chances of earplugs entering the food supply and increases employee compliance.

How to choose the right metal detectable earplugs for your workers

Unlike the majority of metal detectable earplugs on the market, 3M metal detectable earplugs are popular among food manufacturing facilities because they can be objectively, and quickly, fit tested with the 3M™ E-A-Rfit Dual-Ear Validation System to help ensure the worker has proper hearing protection. This system determines a worker’s Personal Attenuation Rating (PAR) and makes it easier to find the best-fitting earplug for that individual.

3M metal detectable earplugs come in numerous styles, including Foam Roll Down, Push-to-Fit, and Reusable—all to increase employee comfort. Providing employees with a variety of earplug selections can help ensure workers are properly protected.

To learn more about metal detectable earplugs, please visit 3M.ca/Hearing.