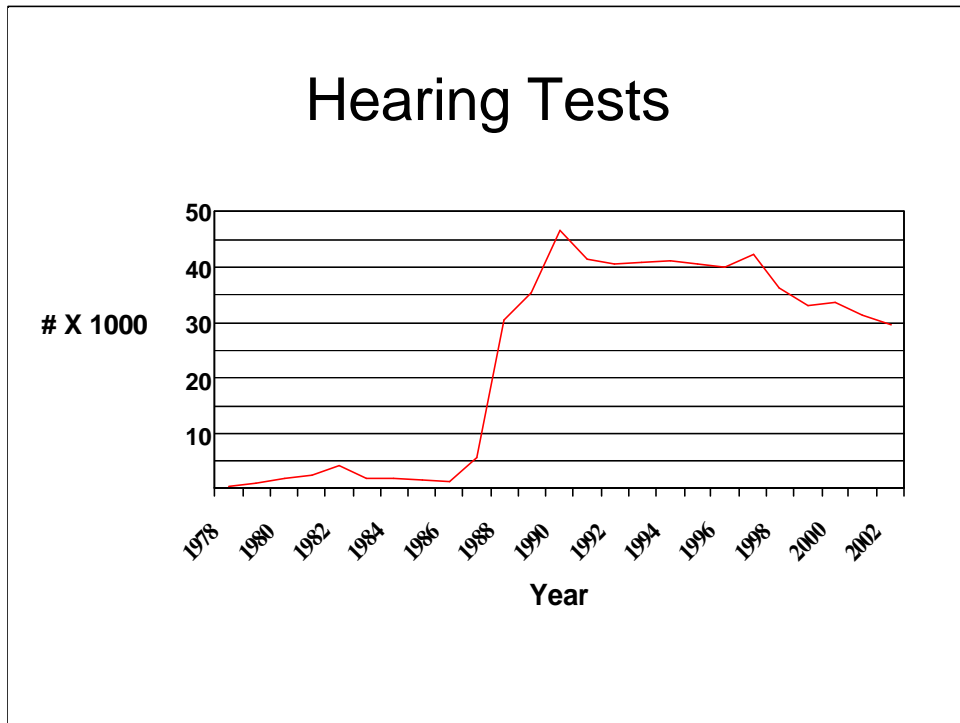


Hearing Conservation in the Construction Industry

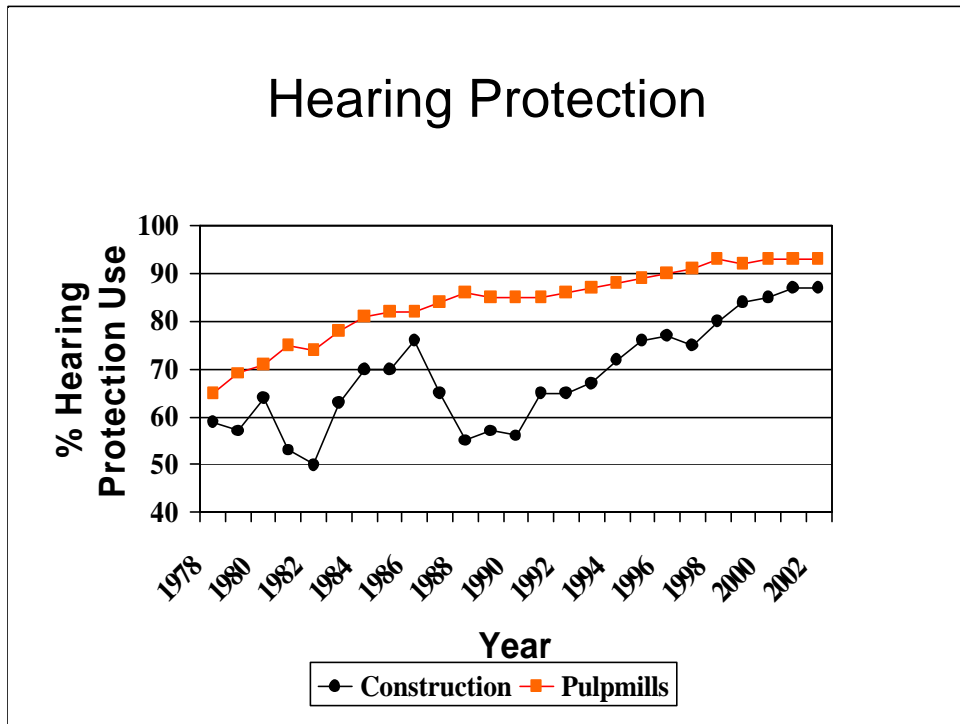


This graph shows the number of construction industry hearing tests sent to the WCB from 1978 to 2002.

The *Industrial Health and Safety Regulation* first required annual hearing tests of noise-exposed workers in January 1978. An industry-funded payment program for construction hearing tests was introduced in October 1987.

Requirements for hearing tests are currently set out in *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* sections 7.17-7.21.

Hearing Conservation in the Construction Industry

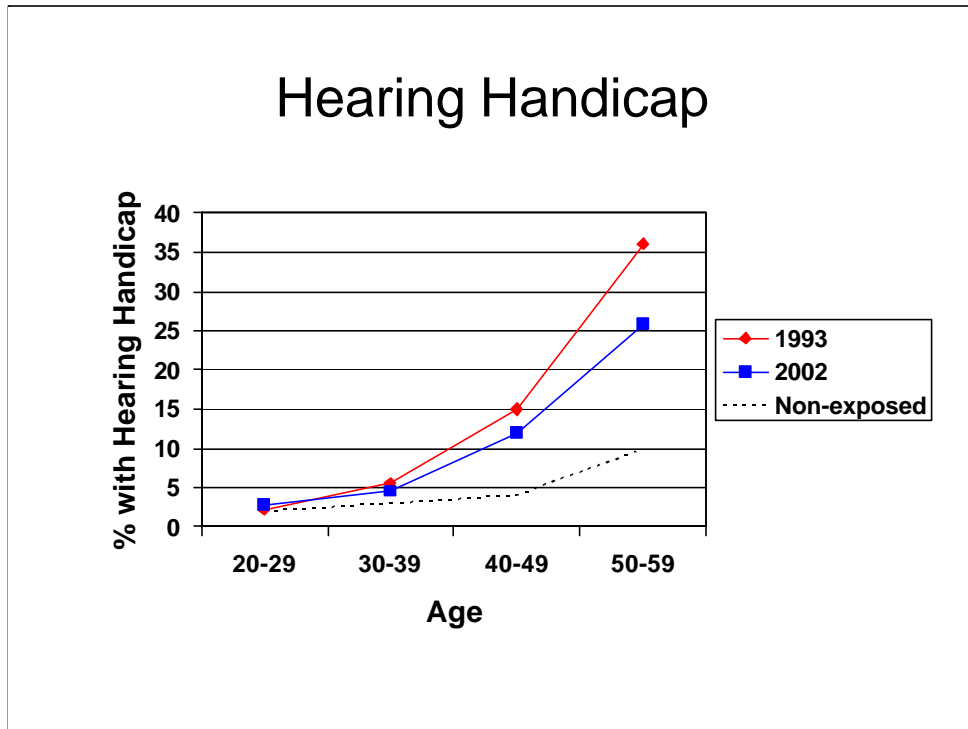


This graph shows the percentage of workers tested who report regular use of hearing protection in the construction industry and for comparison, the pulp mill industry. The pulp mill industry has a history of successful hearing conservation programs, including high use of hearing protection.

Construction workers show variable use of hearing protection from 1978 to 1989. During this period, the number of hearing tests conducted was low. Most construction hearing tests done prior to 1989 were in road construction, the subsector that also reported the highest use of hearing protection.

From 1989 to 2002, the trend is smoother and shows steadily increasing use of protectors.

Hearing Conservation in the Construction Industry



This graph shows the percentage of construction workers tested who have a hearing handicap*—defined as hearing loss sufficient to cause communication difficulties in daily life.

The dotted line represents the expected percentage of people with hearing handicap due to aging or other causes—people not exposed to occupational noise.

The amount of hearing handicap is low in age groups 20-29 and 30-39. These people are too young to have age-related hearing loss and in the case of workers, they have not had enough noise exposure to cause significant hearing loss.

The 40-49 and 50-59 year olds have likely had substantial occupational noise exposure which may account for much of the hearing loss that is evident.

From 1993 to 2002, the percentage of workers with hearing handicap decreased in the two oldest age groups. However, in 2002 the percentage of workers with hearing handicap is still higher than in a non-noise exposed group of the same age.

*American Academy of Otolaryngology— average hearing level at .5, 1., 2, and 3 kilohertz greater than 25 decibels.

Hearing Conservation in the Construction Industry

Hearing Loss Claims Costs

Year	\$Health Care Only	\$ PPD	Total \$	# with PPD	\$PPD/claim	CPI Conversion factor	\$ PPD/claim (Equivalent to 1993)
2002	1,571,052	441,379	2,012,431	106	4163	0.855	3560
2001	1,431,289	998,400	2,429,689	108	9244	0.875	8088
2000	1,429,030	491,107	1,920,137	97	5062	0.897	4541
1999	2,086,961	637,503	2,724,464	128	4980	0.921	4587
1998	1,918,233	826,621	2,744,854	137	6033	0.937	5653
1997	1,942,942	714,920	2,657,862	159	4496	0.946	4253
1996	2,092,674	1,053,230	3,145,904	248	4246	0.961	4081
1995	1,285,859	662,688	1,948,547	161	4116	0.977	4021
1994	2,364,085	747,202	3,111,287	177	4221	0.998	4213
1993	1,676,109	871,470	2,547,579	154	5658	1	5658

This table lists costs of hearing loss claims for the years 1993 to 2002 for the construction industry. Included are costs for health care only (primarily hearing aids) as well as permanent partial disability (PPD) awards. PPD (functional) awards are based on degree of hearing loss.

PPD costs (adjusted for inflation) have declined by 37% over a 10 year period. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used to convert present-year dollar values to 1993 equivalents.

(Over this period, the formula for calculating PPD's and the rules for eligibility for a PPD were the same.)