**PRESS RELEASE**

Effective hearing protection prevents irreversible hearing loss

***27 February, 2014:*** *The African division of MSA - a global leader in the development, manufacture and supply of sophisticated products that protect people's health and safety - is aiming to increase awareness of the importance that hearing protection plays in industries.*

All forms of safety in the workplace are of vital importance, and MSA Africa senior HEFHC (Head, Eye, Face, Hearing and Communication) product manager **Loren Pearson** reveals that hearing protection in working environments is often disregarded, as people do not see a need for it. “Of all the safety topics, hearing protection is the least understood, as there is no pain associated with loss of hearing.”

Pearson explains that constant exposure to loud noises will result in hearing loss. "The maximum amount of sound that the human ear can endure is 85dB(A) over a 40 hour period per week, before hearing loss will occur. Workers that need to shout to be heard from a short distance are at risk of being exposed to 85dB(A) or higher and, although it is law to provide adequate hearing protection at 85dB(A) or higher, it is recommended that hearing protection should be offered to individuals working in an environment with a noise level of 82dB(A) or higher."

According to Pearson, a person should also be careful not to over-protect an employee’s hearing capability by blocking out too much noise, as this is a potential safety risk as the individual may not be able to hear important sounds such as warning signals and vehicles.

Three types of hearing loss are typically experienced after long exposure to loud noises without appropriate hearing protection. The first is temporary threshold shift, which arises when different noise levels are encountered during the course of the day, causing a person’s hearing to worsen over time. It is not necessarily permanent and hearing will return to being fully functional following sufficient rest in a quiet environment. However should you exposure yourself to high noise levels frequently, hearing loss will occur.

Noise induced hearing loss is another threat to workers, and is common among individuals that are continuously exposed to noises above 85dB (A) without adequate protection. This results in excessive pressure being placed on the hairs of the cochlea, and unless adequate hearing protection is used this will lead to permanent hearing loss.

The third type of hearing loss is known as impact sound, where permanent hearing damage can be caused immediately by sudden, extremely loud, explosive noises such as those caused by pyrotechnics. This involves irreversible damage to the nerve of the cells in the cochlea. Impact sound, such as a gunshot, can damage or break the hairs of the cochlea, this damage is irreparable, and will ultimately lead to deafness. In order to prevent any of these types of hearing loss, Pearson stresses that adequate hearing protection must be used and fitted correctly.

“It is important to make the right choice when it comes to hearing protection. People have their own preferences when it comes to their hearing protection, and it is advisable to provide employees with a choice of products with the correct attenuation level, so that they can choose the one that best suits them,” she explains.

MSA Africa offers a wide range of hearing protection products, including; disposable earplugs, semi-reusable earplugs, reusable earplugs, banded earplugs, passive and electronic earmuffs, and communication sets.

The MSA left/right earmuffs are available in low, medium, and high attenuating variations, with individual left and right ear cups. All MSA earmuffs have a unique and careful design for perfect fit and performance. MSA Sordin Supreme Pro Electronic earmuffs are level dependent and amplify sounds below 19dB while filtering out any harmful noise levels above 82dB.

Pearson recommends that disposable earplugs should be used for a maximum of one week, but are actually designed for a once off use. These types of products are commonly made from foam or polyurethane. Reusable earplugs can be washed and re-used for up to eight months depending on the type. Semi-reusable earplugs are also available, and can be used for up to four weeks. For intermittent use, MSA Africa offers banded earplugs, which consist of flexible tips that are attached to a lightweight headband.

All MSA hearing protection products come standard with a noise reduction rating (NNR) based on American (ANSI) standards or single number rating (SNR) based on Europe (EN) standards. This value represents the amount of decibels that the product is able to block out if inserted correctly.

Pearson concludes by highlighting the importance of choosing hearing protection that is not only correctly suited to a particular application, but also to the individual wearing it. “Clear and effective communication is vital in any industry. By choosing the correct hearing protection, employees can communicate effectively with one another, without compromising their long term hearing."

***Ends***

**Notes to the Editor**
There are numerous photographs specific to this press release. Please visit [http://media.ngage.co.za](http://media.ngage.co.za/) and click the MSA Africa link.

**About MSA**
MSA been the world's leading manufacturer of high-quality safety products since 1914. MSA products may be simple to use and maintain, but they’re also highly-sophisticated devices and protective gear - the result of countless R&D hours, relentless testing, and an unwavering commitment to quality that saves lives and protects thousands of men and women each and every day. Many of MSA's most popular products integrate multiple combinations of electronics, mechanical systems, and advanced materials to ensure that users around the world remain protected in even the most hazardous of situations. MSA's dedication to safety has been the key to its impressive year-over-year growth. In eight of the past ten years, MSA has achieved record growth numbers, with annual revenues of more than US$1 billion.

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