



DECEMBER 15 — Blind Ears

He had music tucked under double hearing protection, just trying to make the day feel shorter, but it made the world go silent. Forklift horns disappeared. Spotters' shouts vanished. Even alarms blended into the background hum. Distraction pulled him into his own head; cognitive drift did the rest. But heavy equipment doesn't pause just because you can't hear it coming.

A warning missed, a cue unclear,
Can turn routine work into real fear.
Keep your ears tuned to what's around
Awareness keeps you safe and sound.

Working around forklifts with your ears blocked is like walking through a crowded grocery store blindfolded — you're going to get hit, and that cart will be full of regret.

Your senses exist to warn you *before* something goes wrong. Turn one off, and hazards don't shrink. You just get easier to surprise.

Hazards

- Forklift strikes
- Missed alarms
- Delayed reactions
- Mobile equipment collisions

Stats

- 1 in 3 forklift fatalities involve unheard warnings
- Double hearing protection reduces awareness by **80%**
- Mobile equipment injures **7,000+** workers annually

Words of Wisdom

- Hearing PPE cannot compromise situational awareness. Keep your head on a swivel.
- If you can't hear danger, danger's already behind you. Don't let it sneak up on you.

Crew Questions

Music can distract us at work by pulling our focus away from the task, especially when we're adjusting volume, changing songs, or getting lost in the beat. It can also block out warning sounds like equipment alarms, moving vehicles, or a coworker calling out—making it harder to notice hazards in time.

- When are YOU most likely to tune out the environment?
- What moving equipment hazards do you rely on hearing first?
- How does noise or music affect your focus on the job?