

KEYNOTE ADDRESS**Launch of the MOSH Noise Leading Practice: Muffling of Pneumatic Handheld Tools****Executive Head of SHE – Kumba Iron Ore**

Programme Director,**Esteemed colleagues, representatives of the DMPR, representatives of the Minerals Council of South Africa, representatives of the Mine Health and Safety Council, the MOSH Team, Organised Labour, Mining Houses represented here,**

Good morning.

Today marks a significant milestone in our ongoing journey toward **Zero Harm**—a journey that defines who we are at Kumba Iron Ore and what we stand for as custodians of human health, safety, and dignity.

We are gathered here to launch a **MOSH Leading Practice** that is not only practical and scalable, but transformative in how we manage occupational health risks—specifically, the **muffling of pneumatic handheld tools**.

Why This Matters: The Reality of Occupational Health Risk**Let me tell you a quick story**

Leo always lived his life with the volume turned up. In his twenties, he was a regular at the front row of rock concerts, and later, he spent over a decade working at a plant crusher. He never bothered wearing ear protection, chalking the ringing in his ears (tinnitus) up to a temporary nuisance after a loud night.

The hearing loss didn't happen overnight. It was a thief in the night, stealing decibels so slowly that Leo didn't even notice. He began to naturally read lips and unconsciously rely on context to piece together conversations.

The moment of truth hit him on a rainy Tuesday. His wife, Sarah, was in the kitchen, trying to have a serious phone call about her business. She had asked him to turn down the television three separate times. Because the TV was loud and his ears could no longer pick up the higher frequencies of her voice, Leo heard absolutely nothing.

Finished with her call, Sarah walked into the living room, clearly exhausted and frustrated. "Leo, I asked you three times to turn that down!" she pleaded.

Leo, frustrated and defensive about his inability to hear, yelled back, "Well, I'm practically deaf!" and stormed out of the room.

Let us begin with the reality we face.

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) remains one of the **most prevalent occupational diseases** in the South African mining industry, contributing approximately **38% of all occupational disease cases**.

Despite progress over the years, cases have **stabilised at around 700 per annum**, telling us clearly, **We have not yet eliminated the risk**.

This is particularly concerning in **engineering and maintenance environments**, where exposure to high-impact noise—often exceeding **100 dB(A)** and reaching up to **121.5 dB(A)** at ear position—remains a daily reality.

This is not just data.

This is about people.

This is about lifelong, irreversible harm.

From Compliance to Elimination: A Strategic Shift

The work done at Sishen demonstrates a critical shift in our approach:

Moving from **monitoring and compliance** → to **elimination of hazards at source**.

Through the application of engineering controls—specifically **mufflers fitted to pneumatic tools**—we have achieved:

- Reduction in PT gun noise from **105 dB(A) to 67.9 dB(A)**
- Reduction in impact wrench noise by **more than 10 dB(A)**
- Elimination of excessive exposure risk at the operator level

These are not incremental improvements. These are **step changes in risk reduction**.

And critically, this was achieved with **minimal impact on productivity**, proving that safety and performance are not competing priorities—they are mutually reinforcing.

The Broader Value: Beyond Noise Reduction

What makes this leading practice powerful is that its value extends far beyond hearing conservation.

It contributes to:

- Reduced dust exposure and improved air quality
- Lower risk of injuries from uncontrolled energy release
- Improved equipment reliability and reduced downtime
- Significant cost savings—over **R226,000 annually** in nitrogen sensor replacement alone

This is the essence of **integrated risk management**—where one intervention delivers **health, safety, operational, and financial benefits**.

Elevating Occupational Hygiene: A Strategic Imperative

Colleagues,

This brings me to a critical message for today:

We must elevate occupational hygiene to the same level of priority as safety. I usually say to the team, let us make Occ hygiene famous 😊

For too long, occupational health risks—noise, dust, fumes, and chemical exposure—have been **less visible but equally harmful**.

Occupational hygiene is not just about compliance measurements. It is about:

- **Anticipating hazards** before exposure occurs
- **Recognising high-risk activities** in our processes
- **Evaluating exposure pathways holistically**
- **Controlling risks at source through engineering solutions**

The muffling intervention is a perfect example of what **modern occupational hygiene leadership** looks like:

- ✓ proactive
- ✓ data-driven
- ✓ engineering-focused
- ✓ sustainable

We must now replicate this thinking across all health hazards—**noise, dust, diesel particulate matter, and beyond**.

Leadership, Culture, and Sustainability

The success of this initiative did not happen by chance.

It required:

- Strong **leadership commitment**
- Active involvement of **organised labour and frontline teams**
- A structured **MOSH adoption process**
- Continuous **training, monitoring, and behavioural reinforcement**

Most importantly, it required a **culture that values prevention over reaction**.

As leaders, we must ensure:

- Mufflers are treated as **critical controls**, not optional add-ons
- Teams are empowered through **competency and awareness**
- We sustain momentum through **Visible Felt Leadership and accountability**

Call to Action

Today's launch is not the end—it is only the beginning.

I want to challenge every one of you:

- **Adopt this leading practice fully and consistently**
- **Seek out similar opportunities to eliminate risks at source**
- **Champion occupational hygiene as a core pillar of SHE excellence**

Let us not accept a world where workers lose their hearing to earn a living.

Let us not normalise exposure that we have the power to eliminate.

Closing

In closing:

This leading practice demonstrates that **innovation, collaboration, and commitment** can deliver real change.

It proves that:

Zero Harm is not an aspiration—it is achievable through deliberate action.

Let this launch be remembered not just as a technical milestone, but as a defining moment where we **raised the standard for occupational hygiene for the Mining Industry**.

Thank you.