

Congratulations to the winner of the 9th Safe-in-Sound Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention Award™

by **Thais Morata, PhD**



For the ninth consecutive year the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and NHCA presented the Safe-in-Sound Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention Award™ at the 2017 Annual Hearing Conservation Conference. This year's award was given to Deputy Sheriff Ryan Scott of the Alachua County Sheriff's Office in Florida who demonstrated initiative and innovation in examining noise exposure among police officers and identifying potential solutions in order to be safer on the job.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than 1.2 million Federal, State, and Local law enforcement officers work in the United States [DOJ 2011, 2012]. These officers are required to train regularly in the use of firearms, typically at indoor firing ranges, and are often exposed to impulsive sounds that exceed the occupational health limits of 140 decibels (dB), with sound levels often reaching 160-170 dB peak sound pressure levels [NIOSH 2014].

Deputy Sheriff Scott recognized the potential risks that firearms qualification posed to his hearing health early in his career. Law enforcement firearms training takes place for eight hours at an interval of four times a year for standard patrol officers, every month for the typical special teams or SWAT team member, and up to 20 times a month for the agency's firearms instructors. In each eight hour session, an officer could accrue hundreds to thousands of rounds of exposure to firearms impulse noise. Typically officers are provided little to no education on hearing loss prevention or hearing protection devices.

Deputy Sheriff Scott sought guidance from a faculty team at the University of Florida to learn about the high-level impulse sounds produced by firearms and interventions to minimize the risk. The new knowledge motivated him to develop an educational workshop: "Firearms Training and Hearing Loss" tailored



specifically to the law enforcement community. As part of the program, Deputy Sheriff Scott educates workshop attendees about the potential for unprotected firearm sounds to damage their hearing, and the use of specialized hearing protection devices and firearm suppressors to reduce the sound levels. Deputy Sheriff Scott is a speaker who has credibility; he engages attendees with his own real-world career and training experiences. His commitment is even more noteworthy when one realizes that Deputy Sheriff Scott has invested both his personal time and money to voluntarily develop, travel and deliver his training sessions. He has also become an advocate, seeking to increase the availability of technological solutions and devices that integrate hearing protection with radio communication systems, so that situational awareness is preserved for those whose hearing is critical to job performance and safety.

Deputy Sheriff Scott also reached out to a variety of stakeholders, including public safety officers and supervisory administrative personnel responsible for acquisition and purchasing decisions to educate them on available products and technologies that can help protect their personnel such as earplugs, earmuffs, safety glasses, and radio integration into earmuffs for range commands from firearms instructors. You can learn more about his program and the real world success of all of our previous award winners at www.safeinsound.us.

References

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NHCA Annual Conference News

by Rachel Bouserhal
NHCA Program Chair

42nd NHCA Annual Conference

All of us want some of the same things in life: joy, good health, and of course happy ears. NHCA conference attendees, presenters and exhibitors are working together so we can have *Happy Ears for Many Years!*

Please earmark February 15-17, 2018, to attend the 42nd NHCA Annual Conference, Happy Ears for Many Years, held at the Caribe Royale All-Suite Hotel and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. The conference will feature workshops, podium presentations, poster sessions, plenty of exhibitors and round table discussions. **NEW** for 2018 are panel discussions! See the Program Chair Task Force report in Spectrum and visit the NHCA website for conference updates (<http://www.hearingconservation.org/>).

Call for papers is open for 2018 conference attendees!

If you have research you want to share with your fellow hearing health enthusiasts, workshops that will teach us all a thing or two, and/or posters showing off your results and presentation skills, now is the time to get started. NHCA wants to see them all! Deadline for submissions is August 11, 2017. Looking forward to hearing from you!



43rd NHCA Annual Conference. In 2019, the annual conference will be held in Dallas, Texas.

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The mission of the National Hearing Conservation Association is to prevent hearing loss due to noise and other environmental factors in all sectors of society.

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