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Hearing Protection: Delivering Safety and Service to the Community

Presenter: Wes Christ

- [Anna] Good morning everybody. I am going to be running through the webinar FAQs with you guys before I turn everything over to our presenters today. I'm gonna run through the learner outcomes before I turn this over to our presenters. So I just wanna review that at the end of this course, you will be able to list at least three personal protective equipment devices available today. You'll be able to explain the rationale behind delivering hearing conservation services in the hearing clinic, and you'll be able to identify which PPE device to fit for a patient based on hearing loss or noise exposure. All right, and at this time I'm gonna turn this over to our presenters.

- Good morning or afternoon, depending on where you're at today. My name is Wes Christ. I am the SoundGear product account and specialist. And thank you all for taking time here today. We'll get through this, kind of talk some different things on how you can use hearing protection to help out in your clinic, but we'll start with just a little overview of the market for hearing protection and hearing loss. One big thing is that hearing loss and tinnitus are very prevalent with veterans from the military. They're actually, they're number one and number two service-related disabilities are tinnitus and hearing loss, and they are the largest consumer of hearing aids in the United States. So that's a very big area of growth where, you know, hearing protection can really help out on the front end to prevent, you know, further damage coming down the line.

Just a little outlook on the market for hearing protection. As you can see in 2021 it was a \$1.7 billion industry, and with projections seeing that growing to over 5 billion just in the US within the next seven years now. A lot of numbers in here just kind of showing a steady growth on both passive hearing protection as well as active hearing protection, but in the last couple years the active has definitely been growing at a higher rate than passive protection. Just within SoundGear, a few internal things that we have done. In June of last year, we did introduce our SoundCheck Live app, which is going to give, you know, an app you can download on your phone for free.

Gives the user the ability to, you know, see the sound environment that they're in. It'll give them a reading of decibels to let them know if they might be in an area of danger where hearing protection is going to be important to wear at that point. We do a lot of these when we go to different races and things like that just to show people, you know, it might not seem like it's very loud, but exposure over a long period of time is going to start having a damage. In August, we did release a update, a firmware update on our Phantom product. I'll get into that a little bit more here in a future slide, hitting on that product, but we were really excited with that update that came out.

In February this year, in a couple weeks, actually, on the 12th we are going to have our launch on our new website. We did let out a soft launch, but this one we're gonna kind of get out in front of it more, just making sure there's not any bugs or kinks, or anything that we need to work out at this time. Q3 of 2024 here, we're looking to have our new Instant Fit product come out. Our current product is a very good product. Just a little bit dated on technology on what's out there, so we're excited to get this new product out. A little easier to get into consumer's hands as well. And then Q3 of next year, we're looking to have a new product launch.

This one is going to be also a non-custom product, but take a lot of the current technology we have within our Phantom and some new things that we've been working on to make that product nicer as well. So SoundGear. Obviously hearing protection is what it does, but it's a great way and a great tool for you to use to serve your patients in the hearing health. The biggest things with it is, you know, kind of how do you bring it up to your patient? What kind of environments are there gonna be? What's the noise level of that environment? Will they still be able to have communication? How long were they wearing 'em? As you can see on here, a lot of it is just same thing you guys are currently doing with hearing aids when you're interviewing your patient to see what their, you know, their environments and everything like that where they need help with

hearing, we can use those same practices now to order to find out what type of hearing situations they're in, where they need protection.

Just a few bits of hearing protection, hearing loss, I know it's basic, but the noise reduction rating is the range of protection expected from any hearing protection device under normal conditions. The NIOSH established that any workers exposed to 85 dB or more over an eight-hour workday or a higher risk for developing hearing loss over their working lifetime. Again, it doesn't seem like 85 decibels is loud, as we know, for a short burst, but over time that's going to cause damage. Then hearing loss also identified in the clinic presents a case. I mean, obviously with history of noise exposure, possible tinnitus and anything over a threshold notch of around 4,000 hertz. Just the one little fact, 'cause I know there's things going on in the market with foam earplugs.

They're not classified as a specialty hearing protection device, like a lot of what we're going to review will be. This year, again, as I just hit before, we just released last year our SoundCheck Live app. It's a great feature to have. Not only will it tell you the environment that you're in with the decibel level of what it's at and the sound around you, but then there is a chart that you can switch over to as well that gives you a little bit more information on that environment, exposure to that and what type of hearing protection is going to be well suited for that environment. Available on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Again, just another way you can discover, you know, ways to protect your hearing and a fun little fact, that 88% of teenagers admit that they are actively engaging in activities that can damage their hearing.

So they're actively doing it, but I think a lot more are being aware to it after living with parents and everyone who has had hearing loss around them, bringing some situational awareness to that. So the biggest things that we stress when we're doing our hearing protection is a great impression. We're gonna wanna use the cotton dams over the Otoblocks because that's able to let us get a little bit deeper into that canal.

We're gonna want to go deep there into the second bend, and we're gonna want a real full impression done. We can obviously take away material and make the product smaller, but we can't guess any voids or anything like that in the impressions to fill that in to make a good product, to ensure that we are fully sealing the ear canal to protect the hearing of the wearer.

We want to get a full impression up into the helix. That's a couple reasons there again, ensuring proper seal, but that's also helpful to give us another retention point in order to help hold the device in place so that it's not falling out of our patient's ears. Always double check the work. Make sure it's a good impression in full. It's a lot easier to take another impression while they're in the office, versus having them come back down the road if we're unable to use that impression to build the product. So now we'll get into more of the product knowledge type of everything here. So this is our Phantom. Our Phantom is by far our most popular product in the custom electronic hearing.

Another point we'll get to later is the eligibility with insurance to use this product under their hearing aid insurance. But a little about the Phantom. It is a 22 decibel noise reduction rating on that. When we did send that out to a third party for testing. We did send some different products based on different ears and ear canals, as we all know, everybody's ears are a little different. So the 22 decibel noise reduction rating is what we got back as the lowest score on those. So that's why we do market it with that 22 decibel noise reduction. Most people we do find are in that 24 to 26 range. We are utilizing the same 2.4 gigahertz low-energy Bluetooth that we do use in the hearing aids for streaming.

So now that has really helped with this product to open it up outside of just a hunting and shooting focus. Well, now this product can be worn in different environments. If you're out mowing your lawn and you wanna listen to music, have the ability to take a phone call. If you know you got something importing you're waiting on, you now have

that ability to do it while wearing your hearing protection at the same time. Big thing obviously with any custom device is having the feedback canceler in there, preventing any whistling or anything like that from happening. Also what we did here with our firmware update is enhanced our power management feature. So a lot of what we did with the Phantom was piggybacked off of hearing aid technology.

So with the Phantom, when you would remove it from the charger, it would automatically power on, and so when it auto-powered on, people aren't using them every day like they are when they are wearing hearing aids. You wake up in the morning, get 'em on and you're going through your day. Most people with hearing protection charge them after use, and then maybe aren't using them for a few days. So what we did is we deactivated the Auto On feature. So now with that firmware update, they will no longer power on automatically when you do take them off of the charger. That was hinting at one of the number one complaints we got was the battery of the devices.

The other thing our firmware update did is the power button. There's a button on the device itself to power on and to power off. That was a quick press to turn that on, so if somebody would take them off the charger, power them down 'cause they're not using them right away, this would then put 'em into their carrying case, and say that button got bumped, well, now they accidentally would power on, and then they're no longer, you know, then the battery is dead by the time they go use them. So we now change that to a longer five-second press and hold. So that has eliminated a lot of the issues of accidental power-ons, and helping with the battery management.

One thing we did incorporate as well through all the three listening modes of the Phantom is we added in our wind noise management. Obviously the biggest battle for any amplifying device is going to be wind. So we implemented that through all listening modes in order to help knock that down, 'cause most people will be wearing these in

an outdoor environment. Third thing we did with our update, the firmware update, was we activated the two-way audio. So now again this is just for iOS users with Apple, but now if you do have your Phantoms connected with your phone, you can press the button when you receive a phone call to answer it and now you've got your two-way audio and you don't have to pull your phone out of your pocket.

The push button which does your power on/power off also works as your memory button as well. So there's four listening modes or four memories on the Phantom. This will cycle through all those four. The memory buttons are going to be synced together between the left and the right device. So if you change the left, you don't have to change the right side. They'll stay together. There is a rotary volume control wheel on both left and right devices. Those are independent, so changing the volume on the right side won't have any effect on the left side. So you'll have to adjust those accordingly for whatever's comfortable for your environment. Just kind of reviewing the four listening modes of the Phantom.

The first mode is going to be what we call Normal. What that will do is amplify all the sound around you. It does have a max output of 90 decibels so it will not amplify over 90 dB, but also whenever there's a sound present over 90 decibels, the amplification will cut. It's a one-millisecond reaction time to shut the amplification off, as well as to bring it back. So when that loud noise is gone, whether it's the quick impulse of a gunshot or somebody on a construction site starting up a saw. Until that sound is gone, they won't get any amplification, you'll just be protecting your hearing, but then there's no audible delay when that volume comes back, when the sound is gone.

That's on the first mode, and that's the same against all three of the, or all four of the listening modes. The second mode is our Max Compression. So what we did with that is basically took the Normal mode, number one, and we added our Max Compression algorithm to that. So now just when there is that impulse sound of a gun blast, or say a

hammer or anything like that, helps to just reduce down that noise from the sound going off. The third mode is our High Frequency Boost. What we did with that is we took a whole bunch of hearing tests with a high frequency loss and found the average curve and created a hearing aid memory for that, so that people that might have a mild hearing loss, usually due to loud noise exposure without hearing protection, as we know is those higher frequencies.

So this just gives them a little bit more assistance in those areas if they do have some complications or a known hearing loss to wear these devices, still be able to communicate with their surroundings, and protect their hearing at the same time. The Phantom is a rechargeable product as well. It was the first custom-fit Bluetooth rechargeable hearing protection on the market. We are getting 23 hours of battery life off of that, and that is including four hours of streaming. So if you're not doing any streaming at all, you're easily getting 24 plus hours out of the day. If you are streaming the entire time after a full charge, you're getting still 16 hours of battery life, which is very good for what's out there on the market.

We're using the lithium ion rechargeable batteries, as well as it has that onboard battery for the charger as well, so you can actually, a lot of people who might be out in the field, say they're hunters and they're going into the woods for a few days, a lot of 'em get concerned about not having batteries to change out for their devices. But with this onboard battery for our charger, you can actually fully charge your Phantoms three times before you need to plug that back into a power source to charge those Phantoms again. So really gives it a lot of flexibility as far as being a product to travel, and everything like that. Again, we do have Apple and Android compatibility with the Bluetooth.

We do use our same Hear Clear wax filter system on the Phantoms, and our Silver electronic hearing protection as we do in the hearing aids, whenever somebody does

purchase these, we send them out two packs of wax filters so that they have them available as replacements as needed. With this, with the Phantom, there's no kind of in-the-field diagnosing or testing that can be done, so whenever I have a patient that is saying, you know, it just stopped working, I can't hear anything. As we know from hearing aids, the number one thing to do is ask if they checked that wax filter and switch that out yet. The matrix on this, the 90/30, again that 90 is going to be our max output, so we're not gonna be doing any amplification over 90, and that's also where amplification does cut out.

30 decibels is the amount of gain that we can get out of the device, depending on where the wearer does have the volume control set on that. Options for colors and everything on the Phantom, the only option on the face plate is going to be white. For the shells we do have a black option. We do also have clear shells or a red/blue combination, which we just use again, same as the hearing aid world, to discern between right and left. Even if they don't go with the right and left, we do have it stamped on there, an R for the right side and an L for the left side. Pardon me, I'm gonna take a drink of water here.

So as I kind of said I'd be coming to it, so the Phantom is FDA-classified as a hearing aid. So it is an eligible product to be billed through insurance based on your clients or your customer's insurance coverage. We've seen a very natural large growth, and maybe some of you have even seen it in your own clinic, through government with federal employees that do have a hearing aid coverage. Our guideline is always to read the insurance, see what their qualifications and requirements are in order to bill that product out for the customer. As you see, the CPT code on here is gonna be the V5260 for digital binaural hearing aids, ITE hearing aids, appropriate diagnosis code based on the results of their hearing test.

And so our next product for a custom, in-the-ear hearing protection is going to be our Silver product. We did also have a Platinum product but we did sunset it at the end of 2023. So now for custom hearing protection, it's going to be our Phantom and the Silver product here. The Silver is run on a battery, so you're losing rechargeability, and you're also gonna be losing Bluetooth with this product, but this will also run off of a size 13 battery. So once you close the battery door, it is powered on, and then you can adjust the volume with the volume control wheel, based on what's comfortable for the environment that the wearer is in. Here, we do have a little bit higher noise reduction rating on this product, just because there is less technology within it.

So we're able to make it more of a full shell and get more material to protect the hearing a little bit higher rate. You'll also notice on this product it's a 95/30 matrix. So obviously with the 95 that's going to be our max output. We won't be doing any amplifying over that, as well as any sound over 95 decibels is when that amplification cuts out. Same as the Phantom, it's a one-millisecond reaction time to cut that and to bring it back. So again, no audible delay in getting your communications back once that loud noise is present. We do have a lot of people that have had this product Silver and worn it in the past. The Phantom is a little bit newer, about three years old.

So when they upgrade from the Silver to the Phantom, we have heard people say that you know, they're not getting as much volume out of the device, which we do notice, because obviously with the matrix having a 95 decibel output versus 90 with the Phantom. So this is a situation where you'd really wanna read your, you know, your patients' kind of hearing loss, if they do have it, where they're gonna maybe get a little extra boost out of that five decibels of amplification. This might be a better product to suggest for them, even if they're wanting kind of more of the bells and whistles from the Phantom, like Bluetooth and rechargeability. Obviously, we wanna keep our patients', you know, goals in mind and what's best for them.

Our other products that we have for electronic hearing protection, this is our Instant Fit product. This is the product I had mentioned earlier that we're, by quarter three this year, gonna have a new replacement for. This is a great product and even when the new one comes out, if you're in an area where hearing protection is something a lot of your customers are in need of, this is a great product to have on the shelf. It is the only thing that we do have available to purchase directly from our website, but obviously our goal is always to push through your practices. There's two versions of the Instant Fit product. The first one is what we call our recreational, so this is more of your shooting-type environment.

As you can see here, the matrix on it is a 95/15, so they're not gonna get as much amplification out of this product as you would on the custom hearing side, as well as this product, on both of these, there's no volume control or power button. They're both run off of a size 10 battery, and once you place the battery in there, they power on. It does play a tone, three tones, so that you know that it is powered on, but then also with the 95 dB max output, not gonna be amplifying over that, and as well that's when amplification will cut out when there is a sound over 93 dB present, same as the custom products with the Phantom and the Silver, it is a one-millisecond reaction time, so instantaneous to cut out the amplification and to bring it back so you're not losing communication.

The industrial Instant Fit, this one, we changed the matrix on it a little bit lower just because this is, as the name sort of speaks, an industrial-type setting. So whether it's a factory, a plant, anything like that where there's typically more loud noise, we put this product out to be more fitting along the lines of OSHA guidelines for being exposed to certain dBs for certain hours of a time. With that being said, a question we get a lot is people will ask us if our product is OSHA compliant or NIOSH compliant, we always let them know that they don't actually approve individual products. What they do is set the guidelines for an environment when hearing protection is needed.

So if you do have customers that are in an industrial area where they need to meet certain requirements, the things you will need to know, and this again goes into the questioning or interviewing of our customers, just seeing where the environment they're in. If they know they need hearing protection to follow guidelines, typically they know what type of noise exposure that they do have in that environment, so once we find out that, we can look to recommend the appropriate product, whether we are looking at passive or electronic hearing protection. The industrial, same 25 decibel noise reduction rating, no volume control or memories on there to cycle through, and runs on a small size 10 hearing aid battery. You can see on the picture on the bottom right, that's kind of the kit that it all comes with.

So they do get the orange sleeves. We have two different sizes. They get four of each size. That way they can find which fits best for them, and have a backup if anything happens over time with them. They'll receive two packs of batteries, a cleaning tool, as well as they will get a black carrying case so that they can store them in when they're not wearing them. A new product, we've had this for a while through the Ear Mold Lab, but now we've moved this over to a SoundGear product is our Racing Receiver. The young man in the photo here is actually Brandon Sawalich, is our CEO's son, Bill Austin's grandson, who has been racing, and so we brought in this device.

It's a one-way listening communication device. So most drivers either have communication built into their helmet, or they wear some sort of a box on their shoulder or attached to their car that they can plug into so that they're able to receive communication from their spotters, from their crew chief. We're seeing a lot more even smaller tracks, not just big-time racing, but a lot more smaller tracks are requiring electronic communication as well. So again, just reading the environment that your practice is in, this is a great tool to use. All SoundGear products are great tools to use, really, for bringing in, you know, someone who might not be a current hearing aid

consumer or in the market, but it's going to start building that relationship with them, so that when hearing loss may come down the line, they've already got a contact in a relationship built and know where they can go.

So we use our same silicone material here as we do for like our solid plugs, and everything like that. It's a very resilient and strong product. Actually, the silicone that we use has a flashpoint of over 800 degrees, so it's going to be very reliable to use, as well as still have flexibility as the driver is wearing them. From what we've tested and seen in the market, our material is 30% stronger than our competitors. Also Starkey, what we've done for years is our custom products. We build them better than everybody else. So the comfort of the fit, as well as a lot of driver feedback, is that they're getting clearer communication from their crew as well. We can do different cord lengths.

We do have some standard sizes, but we can make it to whatever works well for the wearer, as well as we do have some different jack options because the different drivers, whether they're racing on asphalt, whether they're racing on dirt, there's different options that they are using for those communication devices that they have. And like I kind of hit on already, the superior attenuation just makes it so that they're able to better hear, not only leveling out the sounds around them because they're still obviously in a car, so they're gonna be able, a lot of 'em like to listen to their car and hear the engine. They still have that, 'cause it gives a flat attenuation, but then they're also able to get cleaner communication from their crew and everything as well.

Our next line, so that covered up kind of our electronic hearing protection. Next here we do have some non-electronic products as well. First is going to be our custom solid earplugs. Depending on, again, interviewing with your customer that's coming in, if they are looking for, they don't want electronics, they don't want amplification, their main goal is to get the highest level of noise reduction rating that they can get, our

solid plugs are gonna be the route for them to go in that 27 to 29 dB noise reduction. Here again, we are using our high-strength silicone. We do have it available both in a 40 or 60 shore high strength silicone. Basically just comes down to the 60 is a little bit, it's still flexible, but a little bit more rigid in order to create a harder seal there.

Any SoundGear product, passive hearing protection, what we have done is we've kind of kitted together the more popular features through the Ear Mold Lab. So any passive hearing protection ordered as a SoundGear product is going to come with our removable lanyard, as well as the removable handle on there as well, which is gonna be made out of that same silicone material. It's very resilient for be a lot of use for pulling that out of the ear. As well as it will have our SoundGear logo on the devices as well. We do etch the logo in on both sides and the right one we will color with red, and the left one we'll color with blue. Again, just to help with left and right, kind of doing as we do in the hearing aid world to help discern left and right as well.

Uses for this are gonna be really anywhere you wanna protect your hearing. Like I said, it's going to maximize your hearing protection and give you that highest rating possible. Next would be our filtered plugs, the mini-filtered plugs. These are built out of the same silicone material. Might be, depending on your screen, how easy it is to see. But that white circle in the middle is the filter and we can replace that out with four different options. We can get a 10 decibel, 17 decibel, or 26 decibel noise reduction out of those filters, depending again on what's in their environment. And then the Impulse filter is an option as well. For a lot of people who don't use, like, the electronic hearing protection, but they still want to have a little bit of ability to have conversations and hear their surroundings, the Impulse filter is a great option for them.

What this does is give a flat 15 decibel noise reduction in kind of a normal sound environment, but as soon as there's any impulse sound, like a gunshot or anything that goes off, it'll actually provide up to a 33 decibel impulse reduction. So even though at

15 dBs your conversation is gonna be muffled, you still have that ability to hear, but when there is that loud sound present, you do have the ability for getting a higher level of hearing protection. Another thing, these are also referred to as musicians plugs as well, just because these products do give you a very flat attenuation across most frequencies. Flat is going to be with that 17 decibel device, or filter I should say.

So if it comes up in conversation during your interviewing that you know your customer or your patient likes to do a lot of concerts and go see music, whatever it might be, this would be a great option for those types of areas as well. Again, flatter attenuation across the frequencies. As you can see here on the chart, so on the top left here, that's gonna be the 10 decibel noise reduction, giving you a pretty flat across all frequencies there. Again, this is gonna be great for, you know, all different situations. I would stay away from this if your patient is in the hunting world or anything like that. 10 dBs might not get enough of a noise reduction for them.

These are great products, a lot of people that ride motorcycles as well, just because it is a very flat in the canal, the way that it fits the sculpted shell, so it's a little bit flatter than say, like, our solid plugs that we have. Down on the bottom left is the 17 decibel noise reduction filter. Again, like I said, this one gives you the most flat attenuation across all frequencies. Again, concerts, it's great. So you can still get your pure tones from music coming through, but at the same time you are helping to protect your hearing for that noise exposure in the time that you are there. The 26 dB filter, this one's definitely a lot of shooting, motor sports, places that you might be, again getting you that higher dB noise reduction.

And then as you can see, the impulse filter on the bottom right, again, as I was hitting on before, this one's more set for areas where you're gonna need a little bit of hearing protection, but you're also gonna need to be able to communicate, whether it's shooting, at the range doing instructions, or you know, being at a construction site

where the loud sound might not be present at all time, but you're communicating with your crew, and then all of a sudden someone turns on a heavy machinery behind you and you need to protect your hearing. Then also we do have the high frequency noise filters. These here, you're looking, also known as the Hocks filters. You're looking at a 19 to 22 decibel noise reduction.

It's difficult to see, but to the right of where that lanyard fits in, you'll see that there is a hole there, and then just down inside of there's the white filter. This is to help with, you know, attenuating the sounds to appropriate levels. So this product is gonna be good. You know, you can use it hunting and shooting, but a lot of it is where noise factors in as far as background noise, so your plants, your factories, and things like that, just to help break out kind of that ambient background noise and still be able to communicate and have your hearing. So the way that this works is it takes that loud noise, that impulse sound, whatever it might be, and breaks that down and converts it into thermal energy, and so that way, basically, it is dissipating out that loud noise so that you are getting that hearing protection.

So where we find lots of areas of success here is going to be, again, as I've mentioned before, this is a great tool for your office, and to bring new clients to you. So people who may not be a hearing aid candidate now, but what you're doing is building the whole hearing healthcare for them and we're getting them into your office by building your portfolio with having different offerings for them, as well as starting that relationship and that bond that will help with a future sale for hearing aids. So what we like to do, again, in the interviewing is figuring out what your patient, you know, likes to do. What kind of hobbies do they have?

What kind of work do they do? What type of environments are they in? Not just that, but building off of it, if they are in a certain profession, that might lead to different trade shows they go to, or different lifestyles of hunting and gun clubs that they might be into

as well. Most people, if they are into the outdoors or into different loud environments, they're gonna have coworkers or friends or family that might also be looking for some assistance as well, so that's a great opportunity to use that in order to try and communicate with them, and build more leads and referrals to your office. Another great tactic that a lot of providers we work with use is using SoundGear as an incentive for hearing aids.

So if they're looking at getting hearing aids, now what you can do is offer them a SoundGear product. Whether you're doing maybe a solid mold or something, where you know, give it to 'em either at a discounted rate or maybe you even, you know, throw that in for 'em at no extra charge. Just showing that your office is looking to, you know, take care of them and help out their hearing health. And another great thing as well, if they are going with a custom product like our hearing protection, we do keep those impressions on file. So with that, if down the road they do decide that they would want to say, you know, maybe they just got solid plugs, well now they would like to purchase either a Silver or Phantom product because they want to upgrade their hearing protection, you don't have to make them come in for another visit to the office.

We are able to just use the impressions that we have on file to build that for them. And so if they even are coming in for hearing protection, you know, it's easy to just do an impression and kind of move on to the next one, but a great thing to do is just again, building that whole relationship with them. So performing a hearing test, showing them their hearing loss, and how maybe different things they've done throughout their life, whether it's hunting and shooting without hearing protection, has caused some loss in the higher frequencies, and just explaining to them, you know, why it's important to make sure that we are still protecting what we have, but before you lose it all.

Again, verification of insurance. Again, the Phantom is going to be eligible for insurance coverage for a hearing aid using the diagnosis code, as well as there's even been some

success we've seen using as a hearing conservation if maybe there is no loss present. But again, we always rely you to look back to the insurance of your customer or your patient, and seeing what their insurance does offer for them. And so with that, we're moving over to the questions area here. I know I don't have any visibility on the questions, but they were gonna be reading them off to me if any had come up through the chat here.

- [Michelle] Wes can you hear me?

- I'm working on getting my audio here. Sorry, bear with me a moment.

- [Michelle] Can you hear me?

- Yes, I've got you now, Michelle.

- [Michelle] Okay, great. All right, couple of questions here. Do the mini-filtered devices come with all three filters?

- Great question. I did skip on that. So the mini-filtered plugs are only going to come with one set of filters that comes with the cost of them, but then you can purchase the other filters if they wanna have multiple filters. We always recommend, if they are going to look at purchasing multiple filters, that you do it at the time of purchase because if they do it later or down the road, say in a month or anything like that, what's gonna happen is just the price is going to go up on those filters. So we do provide a little bit of incentive for making that happen at the time of purchase, versus looking down the road, but we're more than happy to sell them at all time.

But yes, with the purchase one set of filters comes with it, that's included in the cost, but on the order forms we do have options for selecting additional filters if that's what they would like.

- [Michelle] Thank you. Another question. "Using the 10 dB and 17 dB filters, is there any attenuation of moderate-level sounds?"

- So we'll jump back, bear with me a moment here. And I don't know, it might be difficult to see on here. And where were they... I'm sorry Michelle, they were looking for hearing protection where?

- [Michelle] Doesn't really describe that. Just "Using the 10 dB and 17 dB filters, is there any attenuation of moderate level sounds?"

- Hmm. Trying to kind of interpret how that might be. I mean, moderate-level sounds, so I guess if it's just referring to, you know, say maybe a more, you know, not a very loud sound, like 100 decibels or anything like that, but if it's more just basic conversation-type sound taken around that, you know, say, 60 decibel range, just for fun, yes it's going to provide a noise reduction even on those sounds. So you're always going to be having hearing protection from those devices at either that 10 or 17 decibel range, no matter how loud or quiet the sound is that's around you. I hope that answers your question. If not, throw it back into the chat, and Michelle will hit me again with it to clarify.

- [Michelle] Great, thank you, Wes. I've got a couple of questions here kind of related to hunting. "What's the best sound protection device for avid hunters with severe high frequency hearing loss?"

- All right, bear with me just a moment. I'm just gonna turn up my volume a little bit here real quick, because I didn't quite catch all of that. Nope, I think I got it here. All right Michelle. I know it was about hunting.

- [Michelle] Great, I'll go ahead and repeat. Wes, can you hear me better now?

- Yep. I'm getting you a little bit louder here, so.

- [Michelle] Fantastic. "What is the best sound protection device for avid hunters with severe high frequency hearing loss?"

- Yeah, so that's gonna be, I guess, the quick answer to it would be looking at probably our SoundGear Phantom. Just because what we have done is, like I mentioned before, adding in that high frequency boost in the third setting on there. Again, it's going to be for, you know, an average, mild-type hearing loss in those higher frequencies, but that is gonna be the one mode that is going to kind of provide some sound coming back to them in the areas where they do have a diagnosed hearing loss. But this is where, you know, you guys, as the professionals, as the providers, taking a look at their hearing test results are gonna be able to make a stronger decision if it's more that high frequency boost is going to be more advantageous at up to 90 decibels of gain or the max output from the Phantom, or like I had mentioned, the Silver product is gonna have a higher output at 95 dBs.

So it's going to obviously provide a little bit louder noise, but depending on the level of that high frequency loss, just turning everything up around them a little bit louder, might not help with distinguishing conversations and things like that. But typically if you're a hunter, you're out in the field, it might not be more conversational things you're worried about hearing, might be more about, you know, hearing the ducks flying by or hearing

a deer crunch through the leaves, and things like that. So that's a great question. It's tough to come up with a straight answer on a lot of these things. What we have noticed when talking with customers that are looking at hearing protection, they're looking for that one answer that "Is this gonna be the best for me?"

" "Is this the product I need?" We usually like to explain the benefits of a couple different options, like I just kind of reviewed the Phantom, as well as I went over with the Silver, and it's just kind of weighing the pros and cons of that five decibel amplification difference, adding in that high frequency boost that we have in the Phantom, and kind of letting them make their decision. Great thing, too, with all of our products, just like in the hearing aid world, we're gonna have a trial period with our products as well. So it's gonna give them the opportunity to get out in their environment and test it out and use it. But I would say for a high frequency loss, you would look either towards the Silver or towards the Phantom would be the best option for a severe high frequency loss.

- [Michelle] Great. "Do you recommend a different product for different types of hunting situations, such as deer hunting versus duck hunting?"

- All right, I heard different situations for different type of game, but what was the question right before that? What product?

- No, "Do you recommend a different product for different types of hunting situations, such as deer or duck hunting?"

- So, I mean, me personally, I wear... I'm a waterfowl hunter, I pheasant hunt, I deer hunt. I've gone bear hunting one time, but that was with a bow, so it wasn't too

important to have my hearing protection, because my bow is pretty quiet. But I mean really it's, the best product I would say is going to be one of the electronic hearing protections when you're out there hunting. Obviously situational awareness. If you're bear hunting, you're really gonna want to hear that bear walking around you if it's anywhere nearby, so that you're prepared and ready to go. But also, you know, with deer hunting, with bear hunting, it's usually one shot. So even though it's a quick impulse one time, well it's one time this year, it's one time next year, and over 20 years you've exposed yourself to 20 different gunshots over 120, probably closer to 140 decibels in your larger rifle calibers, so being able to hear what's going on around you by using an active hearing protection product is going to be the route to go when you're in any of those hunting environments.

Again, whether it's the Phantom, whether it's the Silver product, or even using our Instant Fit. Before I upgraded myself to the Phantom, I was wearing the Instant Fit product. I also do a lot of sporting clay shooting, where we're working, we shoot at different stations and everybody gets a turn, then we move on to the next one. Those were great to have, because walking from station to station, you're usually having a conversation, in my case, usually making fun of my father-in-law for missing a target, but also, I mean, being able to hear when you're, you know, if you're the one running the throwers, you need to hear the person that's up there shooting, calling for you to throw the clay pigeons out.

But once I upgraded to the Phantom, the biggest thing I noticed and the hardest thing, I feel, to really relay, you know, to our patients, to our customers, is moving to a custom product and just the comfortability for wearing it at extended periods of time. When I would go clay shooting, the Instant Fits were great, but I'd still start to get a little bit of fatigue in my ear canals after wearing them for two hours, and gets all warm and take it out and you have a little bit of itch in your ear. Now, with the Phantom, I actually was just on a duck hunting trip down in Texas, or not Texas, Tennessee and Arkansas, and

while I was down there, we were in a large hunting blind that was enclosed minus the openings for us to shoot out of.

And we had 13 guys inside of there, and I was only one of three that was wearing hearing protection, so I scolded them all harshly, but also whenever we did all get up to shoot, that is definitely a lot of noise going on, there's a lot happening inside of that blind as well. And not only was I able to protect my hearing, there was multiple times I was able to hear the birds, the ducks flying before anybody else could. And they thought I was a little bit crazy calling that I could hear a duck before it came out. So that long-winded answer really leads to, you know, in the hunting environment, anything electronic, it really comes down to you know, what your patient wants out of the product, you know, whether you can get them into a Phantom, because now it's not just when they're shooting, now, it's when they are mowing their lawn, if they're working with heavy machinery.

I have a lot of people too that tell me they like wearing their Phantoms working out, versus wearing their AirPods or earbuds. Again, coming back to that custom fit and the comfortability of that, they're able to wear 'em for a long period of time while they're working out, listening to their music, and everything that motivates 'em to get a good workout in. So I would shoot, I would aim towards electronic hearing protection for those hunting environments.

- [Michelle] Great, thank you. Are the Phantoms noise-canceling?

- They are not noise-canceling. That's, we get that question quite a bit, and noise-canceling is definitely the buzzword of hearing protection. So they are not noise-canceling. Noise-canceling is obviously sound fighting sound to bring that noise down and cancel out the noise that you don't want to hear. What we have truly, and the way I always try to explain it, 'cause even though there's amazing and really good

technology within the Phantom, within the Silver product as well, but it's not the electronics that are providing you the hearing protection, outside of that Max Compression mode on the Phantom, it's the solid, it's the plug itself. It's the material, it's what it's made out of that is providing you with that hearing protection, so you're always getting that 22 to 26 decibel noise reduction rating, but your amplification is allowing you to overcome that and still be able to hear your surroundings.

So you're wearing an earplug that amplifies. It's not doing any active noise canceling to deaden out that sound around you.

- [Michelle] Great. Would you recommend the Phantom as an option for a musician instead of foam ear plugs?

- So I would recommend it. I mean it would be a good option for them to have. Again, and I always hit home to this, maybe I fall on it too much, but again, comfort of a custom product, versus wearing a foamy or anything like that. We all know the ear and the ear canal was not built to have anything inside of it. You know, well, shouldn't say anything, there's ear wax, but to have product inside of it, especially something that's putting pressure constantly on your ear canal, you start to get that fatigue. You know, the one thing where a musician might wanna look towards, perfect, I have the screen up right now at the filtered plug options, just because you're getting more of a flat attenuation.

I don't have a graphic on what that looks like for the Phantom, but I know there's a little bit more of a roller coaster on that than there is here with the filtered plugs. So I mean it's gonna be a, yes it's an option because it's going to provide with hearing protection, but there might be a better option available to them through the filtered plugs.

- [Michelle] Great. What would you recommend for group range shooting?

- Say that one more time, I'm sorry?

- [Michelle] What would you recommend for group range shooting?

- I'm sorry, I'm just gonna skip up a little closer to hear you one. More time, Michelle, sorry.

- [Anna] Wes, can you hear me better? Can you hear me better?

- Yes.

- [Anna] I believe what she was asking is what would you recommend for group range shooting?

- For group range shooting? That's excellent. So lots of times in that situation being outdoors, I again would push towards the custom electronic hearing protection. So Phantom, your Silver, and actually I shouldn't leave out the Instant Fit would be a great product as well, because it doesn't make a difference if it's just one gunshot that goes off or if there's a string of them going on down the line, because again, with that one millisecond reaction time to cut amplification and to bring amplification back, it's going to be a quick gun blast. It'll be fine if it's a long sustained sound over that 90 or 95 decibels. It's always gonna be cutting amplification and providing that hearing protection. So again, I use mine all the time sporting clays when it's not just me shooting, but you know, a station right next to us, they're shooting as well.

I'm able to do, you know, protect my hearing, as well as being able to communicate. Again, my example, just being in the duck blind, having all those different shots going off around me, it's not all in unison and 1, 2, 3, shoot. That's the goal, but everyone's

always shooting at their own cadence. So again, I'd say the one instance where maybe it's not going to be ideal going with the Phantom hearing protection, again, just because there is that little bit lower noise reduction, if you do happen to be, you know, in an indoor firing range, most of them are gonna require you to be wearing your ears doubling up. So not only wearing plugs but wearing muffs as well, so those situations, maybe the Phantom might not be the best option, but looking at a filtered plug or solid plug would be a usable product there.

- [Michelle] Great, thank you.

- For which one? Michelle, Ed just popped in here and said you had a question in regards to a launch?

- [Michelle] Yes. I wanted to see if maybe you could kind of review the information about, you know, launch and updates just to, you know, kind of wrap up the session, since you talked about the products and what was maybe being updated. That would be helpful, I think.

- Okay. Yeah, so again, kicking back to what we've got coming down the line for SoundGear here. Q3 of this year, what we are looking for is our new Instant Fit product. We've had a couple delays in getting that out just because the volume that we need that built at, they weren't able to get produced and pass our quality control. So we're kind of jumping back, taking a step back into redesign. So Q3, we should have that new Instant Fit product available. We're gonna be running on all new circuitry. It's gonna have a lot higher level of technology in it. Not sure everybody's history with Starkey and Starkey products, but basically our current version of the Instant Fit is the old amp, the amplifier that Starkey had to offer.

We turned that into a hearing protection device. So that's one coming down the road we're excited about. We're definitely on the edge, just because we've been waiting for quite a while now due to the delays. And then our Q3 2025 launch, what we're looking for there is, that's going to be essentially, easy way to explain it is going to be a non-custom version of the Phantom, but that we're gonna be integrating some newer circuitry as well. That's going to give it a more broad reach is with cell phones as far as connectivity on Bluetooth. Coming down the road, we're gonna have an app that will be available for those new products as well that we're looking 2025 also.

But just kind of bringing a lot of the hearing aid world in so you can have more control and function and features with the new product, including what I've been begging for is the Find My Hearing Aid feature, because everybody walking around in the field at some point has lost their hearing protection. So a lot of good things coming down the road here with SoundGear, so. But yeah, with that Michelle or Anna, I don't know if there's any more questions or...

- [Michelle] That's it. Thank you so much.

- All right, thank you guys. Thank you everybody. Have a great day.