

Can we require worker to wear hearing aid?

Q. An employee with severe hearing loss refuses to use his hearing aid. He works in a loud environment with forklifts and other hazards. Can we force him to wear the hearing aid or otherwise remove him from the floor? We think he's endangering himself because he can't hear someone warning him about a hazard. — N.V., Missouri

A. Under the ADA, an employer is not relieved of its obligation to provide reasonable accommodation to disabled employees who fail to use assistive devices, such as a hearing aid. However, if that disabled employee can't perform the essential functions of his position or he poses a direct threat if he doesn't use the assistive device, then the employee is not qualified for that job.

Nonetheless, you should seek an attorney's advice before deciding to remove this employee from the floor.