

Noise

Introduction:

Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and irreversible—but it is preventable.

Do what you can to protect your hearing.

Removing hazardous noise from our workplace is the most effective way to prevent noise-induced hearing loss, but hearing protection must be worn if noise levels cannot be reduced below a safe level.

Hazards to watch for:

- Short duration, high intensity noise
- Continuous loud noise
- Noise exposure off the job

Indicators of noise exposure:

- If it's necessary for you to speak in a very loud voice or shout right into the ear of a person, it's likely the noise is high enough to require hearing protection.
- If you have roaring or ringing in your ears at the end of the workday, you are probably being exposed to too much noise.
- If speech or music sounds muffled to you after you leave work, but sounds more clear the next morning, you might have been exposed to noise that's causing temporary hearing loss. Temporary hearing loss can become permanent.

How loud is loud?

Hearing protection should be worn when sounds levels exceed 85 decibels based on an 8-hour time-weighted

average. Hearing protection is mandatory when levels exceed 90 dB. You should also wear hearing protection any time you think the noise level is uncomfortable.

Sound levels of common noises are:

■ Bird chirping	30-40 dB
■ Normal conversation	50-60 dB
■ Heavy machinery	70-90 dB
■ Jack hammer/chain saw	100-120 dB
■ Gun shot	140+ dB

Safe procedures:

- Notify management if you feel noise exposure is an issue.
- Don't resist wearing hearing protection when required.
- Wearing hearing protection should be comfortable. Speak up if it isn't.
- Be sure you insert or wear hearing protection correctly. Ask if you aren't sure!
- Keep hearing protectors clean so you don't introduce dirt into your ears.
- Make suggestions to help reduce noise levels.

In conclusion:

Noise can cause irreversible damage to your hearing and can cause you psychological stress. Don't take chances with your ability to hear simply because you don't want to wear hearing protection. Be safe!