



## Hearing Safety

Noise-related hearing loss is a major occupational health concern. Thousands of workers annually suffer from hearing loss because of high workplace noise levels.

Even when it is short-term, noise can cause a temporary change in hearing.

Noise is measured in decibels (dBA). A small increase in decibels results in a huge change in the noise and the potential damage to a person's hearing.

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) sets legal limits of 90 dBA on workplace noise exposure. These limits are based on a worker's time weighted average during an 8-hour day. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that workers' exposures be controlled below 85 dBA for 8 hours to minimize occupational noise-induced hearing loss, which limits your ability to hear high-frequency sounds, understand speech and seriously impairs your ability to communicate.

### Noise may be a problem in the workplace if:

- You hear ringing or humming in your ears when you leave work.
- You have to shout to be heard by a co-worker an arm's length away.
- You experience temporary hearing loss when leaving work.

### Here are some ways to reduce noise hazards

- **Engineering controls**
  - » Low-noise tools and machinery
  - » Maintain and lubricate machinery and equipment
  - » Place a barrier between the noise source and employees
  - » Enclose or isolate the noise source.

- **Administrative controls**

- » Operating noisy machines during shifts when fewer people are exposed.
- » Limiting the amount of time a person spends at a noise source.
- » Providing quiet areas where workers can gain relief from hazardous noise sources.
- » Restricting worker presence to a safe distance away from noisy equipment.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- » Hearing protection devices (HPDs) such as earmuffs and plugs (acceptable, but less effective).

To learn how to create and implement an effective hearing conservation program, visit [www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/noise/hcp/](http://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/noise/hcp/)

Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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