



Hearing Safety

INTRODUCTION

Noise, often defined as unwanted sound, can have different effects:

- Interference with communication, job performance and your safety
- Disrupts concentration, and can startle, annoy, and have other effects
- Cause long-term effects such as hearing loss. Noise can cause pain, ringing in the ears, and even nausea if exposure level is severe.

Hearing Protection

Ideally, engineering design will control noise exposure; however, this may not always be feasible. In situations where it is not feasible, hearing protection can be used to reduce noise levels at the ear. Hearing protection can be provided as ear plugs or ear muffs.

When do you Need Hearing Protection?

- When you are exposed to noise that is 85 dB(a) or greater averaged over 8 hours
- Noise at and above this level is associated with situations where conversations, to be heard and understood, must be held in a very loud voice, or by shouting into the ear of a person
- Hearing noise and ringing in the ears at the end of a shift, or if speech or music sounds muffled after completing a shift, but sound fairly clear at the beginning of the next shift indicates exposure to noise levels that can cause permanent hearing impairment.



What if these Conditions Exist?

If any of these conditions exist, a qualified person should measure the noise level at various work areas with an appropriate sound level meter using appropriate techniques.

Wearing Hearing Protection

Wearing good hearing protection is an important precaution to protect the ears from high levels of noise exposure. Some tips for ensuring effective hearing protection are:

- Ensure that a good seal exists between the surface of the skin and the surface of the ear protector - a very small leak can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the protection
- Ear protectors have a tendency to loosen as a result of talking, chewing, etc., and they must be resealed from time to time during the workday
- Inspect hearing protectors regularly and replace when necessary
- Maintain and clean ear protectors



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- Ear plugs should be made of soft material such as neoprene
- Most of the available ear protectors, when correctly fitted, provide about the same amount of protection (plugs or muffs)
- The best ear protector, therefore, is the one that you can wear properly.

Resistance to Wearing Hearing Protection

Of all the forms of personal protective equipment that are required in work environments, hearing protection is the most common resisted. One of the main reasons given for not wearing hearing protection is they don't think they really need it. Hearing loss occurs gradually, even when exposed to short term high exposure, and when hearing loss is finally recognized, irreversible damage has been done.

Hearing protection is also reported to be uncomfortable, and therefore not worn. With the many forms of hearing protection available, it is possible, and important, to choose one that offers the most protection, and the highest level of comfort to preserve your hearing well into old age!

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