

TOOLBOX TALK

PPE



Hearing Protection

Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common work-related disease. Though it typically happens gradually, damage is permanent. Knowing the signs and symptoms of too much noise can help curb the damage of hearing loss.

Signs & Symptoms

Hearing loss isn't easy to notice. When you're exposed to excessive noise, damage occurs to tiny sensory cells deep inside your ear, so there's no way to see the damage, and there is no pain. Often, the first sign is that you won't be able to hear high-pitched sounds as well as before. In industries with hazardous noise, workers are required to take an annual hearing test. This test helps determine if your hearing is being damaged and what can be done to prevent further damage.

Workers can suffer from hearing loss by being exposed to a single loud noise or by repeated exposure to a consistent noise. Being exposed to a noise louder than 85 decibels (about the equivalent of sustained traffic noise) during an average eight-hour day can permanently damage hearing. Higher levels of noise can cause permanent damage in shorter periods of time.

The best way to determine the sound levels on your jobsite are to use a sound level meter or noise dosimeter. A simple way to test whether noise levels could be hazardous is to talk to someone standing at arm's length from you. If you must raise your voice for that person to hear you, the noise is likely too loud.

Reducing Your Risk

22 million workers are exposed to potentially damaging noise at work each year. For activities with noise above 80 decibels, some ways to reduce your risk include:

- Reduce the noise levels by selecting quieter equipment
- Move equipment further away or in the opposite direction where work is being performed
- Block the noise by building temporary barriers to absorb the noise
- Select hearing protection such as ear plugs or ear muffs

With hearing loss being a long-term danger, reducing your risk on a daily basis is important to protecting your ears. If engineering control methods are not available, personal hearing protection should be used for prolonged activities over 85 dBa.

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Take Home Point:

Hearing loss is a long-term, permanent disease that is caused by continuous exposure to noise levels over 85 dBa. The best ways to reduce your risk is by reducing, moving, or blocking the equipment causing the noise. Personal hearing protection such as ear plugs or muffs will also help keep the noise levels at a reasonable level.

Date: _____

Safety Leader: _____

Crew Members:

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