



Working Safely with Noise

Exposure to excessive noise can cause hearing damage that is permanent and disabling. This can be hearing loss that is gradual because of exposure to noise over times, but damage also occurs with sudden, extremely loud noises. With hearing damage, conversation becomes difficult or impossible and you may have trouble using the telephone. Another problem associated with exposure to excessive noise is tinnitus (a ringing, whistling, buzzing or humming in the ears), which can lead to disturbed sleep. By the time you notice, it is probably too late

Main Points

The level of noise that is likely to damage a person's hearing depends on the individual and the duration. Hearing loss caused by work is preventable, but once your hearing has gone it won't come back

In order to prevent this from happening it is essential that you do all you can to help your employer reduce your exposure to noise at work. Simple methods can be

- Wearing and looking after your hearing protection
- Reducing the amount of time you are exposed to noise
- Ensuring problems with noise control devices or noisy equipment are reported straight away.
- Attending any hearing checks organised for you to help spot the early signs of hearing loss or tinnitus

You can reduce the chance of an accident or ill health by the following advice:-

- Always check equipment before use to ensure that it is well maintained and lubricated – poorly maintained equipment can increase the noise levels produced

- Take measures to reduce noise exposure where possible and according to circumstances e.g. lay down pallets carefully rather than dropping them on the floor.
- Use any noise-control devices provided properly (eg noise enclosures) and following any working methods that are put in place
- Where possible, and safe to do so, set machinery to run and then withdraw from the immediate area.
- Keep vehicle/cab doors shut to reduce the noise inside
- Wear your hearing protection (all the time) when you are doing noisy work or are in a noisy work area– taking it off even for a short while really reduces the overall protection you get, meaning your hearing could still be damaged.
- Observe all (blue) mandatory hearing protection warning signs
- Check Hearing Protection before use for wear and damage e.g. lack of tension of the headband, damage to the soft insert, loose screws.
- Request replacement Hearing Protection items when needed and report any defects
- Keep hearing protection clean – e.g. use plastic storage tubs for ear defenders
- Make sure you have been instructed when and how to use your hearing protection and it fits properly
- Earmuffs should totally cover your ears, fit tightly and have no gaps around the seals – adjust the height for optimum comfort and fit by sliding the cups up or down the guide.
- Earplugs go right in the ear canal not just across it – pull the ear upward and outward during insertion
- Practise fitting earplugs and get help if you are having trouble
- Clean your hands before you fit earplugs and don't share them
- Report any concerns and seek medical advice if you suspect a deterioration in hearing
- Attend any hearing test appointments that are arranged for you.

ALWAYS use hearing protection where needed and reduce the amount of time you are exposed to excessive noise



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