



# Weekly Safety Meeting

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## Protect Your Hearing

Noise is unwanted sound that can affect job performance, safety, and your health. Psychological effects of noise include annoyance and disruption of concentration. Physical effects include loss of hearing, pain, nausea, and interference with communications when the exposure is severe.

Most workers take good hearing for granted. Hearing loss can happen so gradually that it can go unnoticed until it's too late. Then, even a hearing aid may not help. Some assume hearing loss is the unavoidable result of getting older, yet most hearing loss is due to noise over a lifetime.

While loss of hearing may result from a single exposure to a noise or explosion, such traumatic losses are rare.

Most cases of hearing loss begin gradually in frequencies slightly above that of human speech and then subtly spread to lower and higher frequencies. Hearing loss can disrupt job performance, cause stress-related problems, increased heart rate, fatigue, irritability, tension, and lead to unnecessary accidents or injuries on the job.

The workplace can be very noisy. Both the amount of noise and the duration of exposure determine the degree of damage to hearing.

Workers may be exposed to noise from many sources: equipment, vehicles, or tools, to name a few. Any of these things can damage hearing when exposure accumulates over extended periods of time.

### Three Factors May Be Used to Determine the Level of Noise:

1. If it is necessary for you to speak in a very loud noise or shout directly into the ear of a person in order to be understood, it is likely that the exposure limit for noise is being exceeded.
2. If you have heard noises and ringing noises in your ears at the end of the work day, you are being exposed to too much noise.
3. If speech or music sounds muffled to you after leaving work, but sounds fairly clear in the morning when you return to work, there is no doubt about your being exposed to noise levels that can eventually cause a partial loss of hearing that can be permanent.

If any of these conditions exist, a safety professional, using a sound level meter, should measure the noise level at various work areas. He or she can then determine whether the exposure is great enough to require personal protection.

## Here's How to Protect Your Hearing:

- Reduce the noise reaching your ears. Nothing can totally block sound, but some hearing protection devices block out part of the noise.
- Electronic hearing protection devices permit conversations and warnings to reach the ear, but prevent harmful sound-pressure levels. Other electronic hearing protectors pick up and amplify desirable sounds. Some earmuffs or earplugs combine with communication systems for use in noisy areas.
- Earmuffs - filled with liquid or foam - come in various styles for function and comfort. Earmuffs are fitted with a headband made of metal or plastic. Some headbands can be folded or put around the front or back of the neck in various positions. Cooling pads are even available for earmuffs worn in hot work environments.
- Earplugs can be pre-molded to fit all wearers or custom molded to fit exactly. They can be made expandable or non-expandable, and may be either reusable or disposable. Earplugs are available on cords you can wear around your neck so you can take earplugs out and put them in easily.
- Ensure your hearing protection is comfortable, fits properly, and is compatible with other personal protective equipment (PPE) such as a hardhat.
- Check out specially-designed hearing protectors made to wear with other PPE. They attach to slots and brackets on hardhats or helmets for combined hearing, head, and face protection.
- Cooperate with your workplace's hearing protection program. Take the regular hearing tests and wear recommended personal protective equipment. Take good care of your PPE by cleaning it according to the manufacturer's recommendations and replacing it as needed.

## Remember:

Prevention begins with identifying noise sources and evaluating workers' exposures to find out if noise exposure is hazardous. When a hazard is found, employers are required to make changes to reduce or eliminate the noise hazard and educate the workforce about noise and hearing conservation.

***HEARING PROTECTION IS A SOUND INVESTMENT!!***

