Noise and hearing loss prevention

Preventing Hearing Loss

In the United States, hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition after high blood pressure and arthritis. Not surprisingly, hearing loss is among the most common work-related illnesses. Workers faced with occupational noise hazards every day. These guidelines are designed to help keep workers safe from noise exposure in the workplace.

Did you know that within *every* industry sector, there are workers at risk for work-related hearing loss?

Why is prevention important?

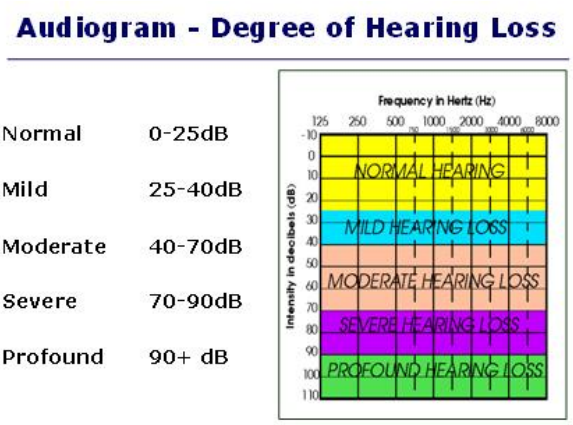
- Almost all work-related hearing loss is permanent, and it can have a profound impact on quality of life.
- As hearing loss worsens, hearing and understanding others becomes increasingly difficult, which can lead to isolation.
- Hearing loss is associated with cognitive (mental) decline and heart problems, such as high blood pressure and heart disease.
- Hearing lose is also strongly associated with depression.
- Hearing loss can lead to loss of employment, when all the sounds we want to hear (e.g. music, voice of loved one) become muted and lack of quality.
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus), which often occurs along with hearing loss, can disrupt sleep and concentration and is associated with both depression and anxiety.
- Hearing loss can impact safety at home and on the job.
- Income is typically lower among workers with hearing loss, than among workers with normal hearing.

Fortunately, with today's hearing loss prevention strategies and technologies, work-related hearing loss can be nearly always prevented.

What can workers do to prevent work-related hearing loss?

Find out if the noise in your workspace is hazardous.

- If you must raise your voice to speak with someone at arm's length, then the noise is likely at a hazardous level.
- You can also check the noise level using a sound level meter app on your phone, such as the NIOSH Sound Level Meter app.
- As your safety manager or direct supervisor to check the noise levels in your workplace, making sure they are below 85dBA.



Reduce your noise exposure:

- Take a break from the noisy activity.
- Reduce noise at the source of the noise.
- Enclose the source of the noise or place a barrier between you and the source.
- Increase the distance between you and the source of the noise.
- Reduce your time in noisy areas.
- Always wear hearing protection in noisy areas, and if using foam plugs, insert them correctly.