

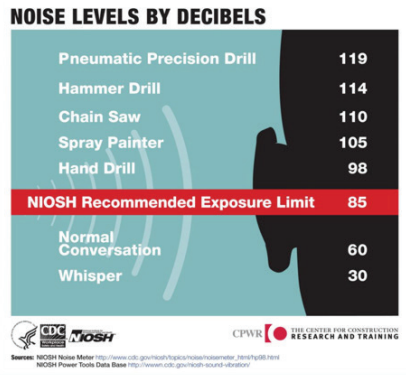


TOOLBOX TALK



NOISE LEVELS

Noise levels on site can permanently damage the small nerves in the ears causing irreversible hearing loss. Seventy-three percent (73%) of construction workers are exposed to noise levels over the National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommended exposure limit of 85 decibels (*The Construction Chartbook, p. 33, chart 33f, CPWR*).



It is important to pay attention to noise levels on site. If possible, measuring with a decibel meter is the most accurate approach. If noise measures over 85 decibels, hearing protection should be worn.

If a decibel meter is not available, the shout test can be employed. If you must shout to be heard standing three feet away, then it is likely the noise level exceeds 85 decibels.

Project planning must include a “noise control plan” that should be verified through on-site testing and monitoring.

You must consistently wear hearing protection. Select the most comfortable option and wear it EVERY time you work in the noisy area.

Types of hearing protection include earmuffs and ear plugs. Select the most comfortable option and keep in mind that in certain instances, like jackhammering or multiple noise source

operations, double hearing protection may be required, such as a combination of ear plugs and earmuffs.

If ear plugs are chosen, ensure they are kept clean and inserted properly - rolled thin and pushed deep into the ear.

If it is possible to move your work away from the noise, do so and spend as little time as possible in the noisy area.

If you are going to be exposed to noisy work consistently on a project or projects, have your hearing tested so you have a baseline to compare to periodically. You can ask your doctor to recheck your hearing during regular doctor visits.



What are some actions you can take today to minimize your risk of hearing loss?

DO

- Test for noise levels so the decibel level is known.
- Wear the most comfortable hearing protection.
- Double up with plugs and muffs at higher volumes

DON'T

- Do not put things on your ears that aren't meant to be there (cotton, tissues, etc.) as hearing protection.
- Do not use earphones as hearing protection—they are not meant for that and have a zero-safety factor.

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Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and workers have rights. OSHA can help answer questions or concerns from employers and workers. OSHA's On-site Consultation Program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information, contact your regional or area OSHA office, call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or visit www.osha.gov.

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