

# Hearing Protection

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), hearing loss is the most common work-related illness in the country. Once you have noise induced hearing loss it cannot be restored. The good news is that noise induced hearing loss is preventable.

A one-time exposure to loud and sudden noise, such as the blast of an explosion, can immediately and permanently damage your hearing. Hearing loss can also occur gradually over months and years from exposure to noise from heavy equipment such as skill saws, air compressors, jackhammers, grinders and other noisy operations. Hearing loss can happen so gradually you might not even realize it has happened.

## You may already have some hearing loss if:

- You have difficult time hearing people around you.
- You must ask someone to repeat themselves.
- You have trouble understanding people on the phone.
- You have ringing in your ears
- You have trouble hearing backup alarms.



The DOSH rules state that over the course of 8-hr shift if you are exposed to noise levels above 90 dBA you are required to wear hearing protection. The louder the noise the higher the decibel level. For example, noise levels for running a jackhammer; 130 dBA, using a chainsaw: 118dBA, talking to someone normally: 60 dBA.

There are several ways to protect your hearing on the job. You may be able to use engineering and/or administrative controls such as, sound barriers, quieter tools and equipment, scheduling loud equipment operations when fewer people are on site, job rotation out of loud areas. If these controls don't work hearing protection will be your last resort. Hearing protection can include earmuffs, foam earplugs, canal caps or customized earplugs. Wear hearing protection properly and make sure it's comfortable so you won't be tempted to take it off. Follow the manufacturers recommendations for maintaining, cleaning, and storing your hearing protection.

**Quick Tip:** If you need to shout to be heard by someone right in front of you, the noise level is probably above 85dBA. Wear hearing protection anytime noise levels are above 85dBA.

Click [here](#) for more information.

