Noise Hazards

WHAT’S AT STAKE

It’s hard to believe that noise can cause permanent damage to your hearing – but it can. It’s important to protect yourself against noise hazards.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Medicine or surgery cannot reverse noise-induced hearing loss. A hearing aid can’t completely restore hearing either.

EXAMPLES

A sudden single loud sound of an explosion, jet engine or air tool can damage hearing. However, hearing loss usually occurs from lower doses of noise over time, with damage adding up.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Your employer is responsible for figuring out the right hearing protection equipment for you to use, and keeping the workplace as free as possible from noise hazards. If you have suggestions, pass them to your supervisor.

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.

FINAL WORD

Hearing damage is permanent, but it can be prevented. Take hearing protection seriously.