



Noise and Hearing Protection

Too much noise on the job can distract you. You may not hear warnings or understand what people are saying.

Loud noise damages the tiny sensory cells inside your ears. Once they are damaged, they cannot be repaired. Over time, too much noise can cause permanent hearing loss and ringing in the ears (tinnitus). In addition to putting your safety at risk, hearing loss can increase the risk of poor health outcomes such as cognitive decline and dementia.

Richard's Story

Richard worked on a 16-month road project, jackhammering concrete. The daily noise was so loud that he could not hear people speaking around him. Richard didn't wear hearing protection because his supervisor didn't require or provide it. He began to notice ringing in his ears. After the job ended, he had his hearing tested and learned he had partial hearing loss.

- ✘ What caused the hearing loss?
- ✘ How could this have been prevented?
- ✘ Have you ever worked in a high-noise area without wearing hearing protection, or know someone who has?

Remember This

- **Always** wear appropriate hearing protection provided by your employer when you are around loud noise. Make sure it works with your other personal protective equipment.

- Make sure you know how to use hearing protection properly, including inserting earplugs.
- Wash your hands before inserting earplugs to help prevent infection.
- Limit your time around loud noise when possible.
 - Take breaks from it when possible.
 - Move away from noise sources or move the noise sources away from your work area when possible.
- Ask your supervisor about buying quieter equipment in the future. Tell your supervisor if you have ideas on how to make your workplace quieter.
- Pay attention to noise levels where you work. You can find out whether the noise level is hazardous by
 - Asking your supervisor.
 - Checking the equipment manual to see if hearing protection is recommended.
 - Using a smartphone sound level meter app found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/noise/about/app.html>.
 - Looking for caution signs about hazardous noise levels.
 - Using the raised voice test. If you must shout to be heard from 3 feet away (arm's length), you should wear hearing protection.
- Have your hearing tested early in your career to have a baseline measurement. Have it rechecked regularly to check changes. Use a hearing aid if recommended.
- Tell your supervisor if you notice hearing problems, like ringing in the ears or muffled hearing at the end of your work shift.

How can we stay safe today?

What will we do at the worksite to reduce noise exposure and protect workers from hearing loss?

OSHA Standard: 1926.52



Noise and Hearing Protection



- ✓ Be aware of high-noise areas. Look for caution signs, measure the noise level, or use the raised voice test.
- ✓ **Always** wear hearing protection in high-noise areas. Make sure it works with your other personal protective equipment.
- ✓ Limit the time you spend around loud noise when possible.
- ✓ Move away from noisy equipment or move the equipment away from your work area when possible.

**GET
INFORMATION**

CDC/NIOSH INFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-800-232-6348 | [cdc.gov/info](https://www.cdc.gov/info) | [cdc.gov/niosh/construction](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/construction)
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