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## Hearing Loss and Noise Exposure

Many construction workers lose a lot of their hearing. Hearing is lost slowly, so you may not notice. Noise doesn't just hurt your hearing. You can also get tinnitus, a ringing sound in your ears. Too much noise can make you tired and nervous, raise your blood pressure, and add stress that can help lead to heart disease.

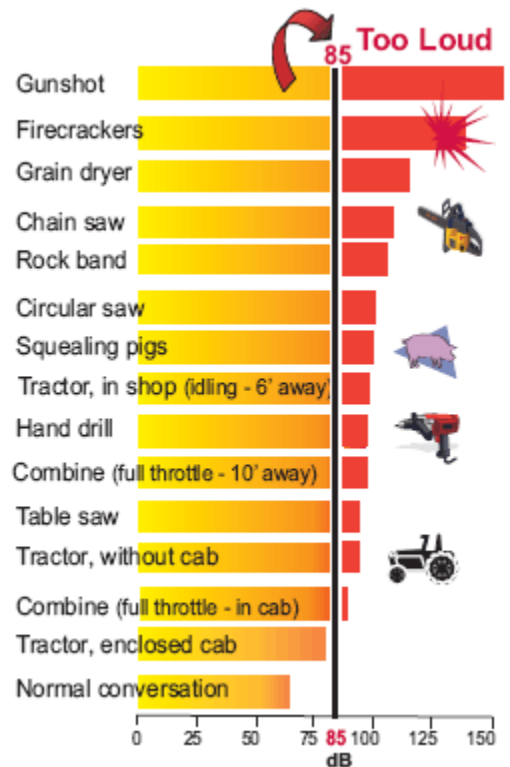
### What is noise?

Noise is unwanted sound. Noise levels are measured on a decibel scale (dBA), which matches the ear's sensitivity to sound. A whisper is about 30 dBA, normal conversation is 60-70 dBA, and power tools are often between 90-110 dBA. If two people at arm's length must raise their voices to be heard, the noise level is above 85 dBA.

### What are safe noise levels?

Exposure to noise above 85 decibels can cause permanent hearing loss. If you are exposed to noises over 85 dBA for at least 8 hours a day, hearing loss can occur gradually over time. For every 5 dBA over that, your exposure time is cut in half. So, if you are exposed to noises at 90 dBA for only 4 hours, hearing loss can occur.

Once noise levels are above 85 dBA, some sort of hearing protection should be worn.



Maximum allowable exposure times	Intensity range (dB)
16 hours for	80 dB
8 hours for	85 dB
4 hours for	90 dB
2 hours for	95 dB
1 hours for	100 dB
30 minutes for	105 dB
15 minutes for	110 dB
7.5 minutes for	115 dB
0 minute for	above 115 dB

### How do I protect my ears?

Wear hearing protection at all times whenever you are exposed to loud noise. Keep a set of earplugs in your pocket so they are convenient and easy to grab. Your supervisor should always have earplugs available to you on the jobsite. If there are no earplugs available, contact the Safety Coordinator:

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