



Hearing Conservation

The number one hazard associated with excessive noise is hearing loss. Often times we don't consider the risk of hearing loss because it happens slowly. Noise exists in the workplace and personal environments. An exposure to high levels of noise may lead to temporary or permanent hearing loss. There are several ways you can limit your exposure to hazardous noise and protect your hearing.

When is hearing protection required?

- When noise levels reach 85dBA during an 8-hr time-weighted average (TWA), workers should be protected through the use of ear plugs or ear muffs.

What are the health hazards?

- Temporary or permanent hearing loss
- Ringing in the ears
- Increased stress or reduced concentration

Recommended Best Practices

- **Engineering Controls**
 - Modify or replace equipment/ use
 - Design building surfaces to absorb sound
- **Administrative Controls**
 - Redesign work process
 - Relocate noisy equipment away from noisy areas
 - Limit duration of exposure by job rotation
 - Display signage indicating use of hearing protection in designated areas
- **Personal Protective Equipment**
 - Earplugs
 - Earmuffs
 - Semi-Aural inserts
- **Training**
 - Train employees on the hazards of noise exposure in the workplace and use of hearing protection.
 - Training should include how to insert and remove earplugs; proper size and fit
 - Wearing headphones to listen to music will not protect your ears, it may make matters worse.

As a rule of thumb, if employees must shout to be heard when standing within three feet of each other, then the noise level in the area may be exceeding the action level for the mandatory use of hearing protection.



Here are some examples of areas or machinery that produce high levels of noise:

- Boiler Rooms
- Chiller Rooms
- Mechanical Rooms
- Generators
- Landscaping equipment:
 - Mowers
 - Chainsaws
 - Chippers
- Construction sites or construction activity
 - Jackhammers
 - Concrete saws
 - Powder Actuated Tools

- Printing machines, copiers

Assess your workplace for noise exposures and identify if hearing protection is needed on a mandatory basis.

This Alliant Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.