

## Hearing Protection

Noise is recognized by OSHA as a preventable cause of temporary or permanent hearing loss, stress, and other physical problems.



Noise is sound measured by its frequency (high or low pitch) and its intensity (loudness measured in decibels (dB)). High frequencies are most damaging. Workers may not be exposed to more than an average of 85 dB over an 8-hour period without hearing protection being provided.

There are three types of noise:

- wide band: wide frequency range (i.e., manufacturing engines).
- narrow band: narrow frequency range (i.e., power tools and saws).
- impulse: temporary pounding (i.e., jack hammer or power punch presses).

### Hearing protection devices

Hearing protection devices (HPDs) do not block out sound completely, but they provide some protection by reducing the amount of sound reaching your ear. At the same time, you will be able to hear speech and important machinery sounds.

### What must my employer do?

Hearing protection must be provided by your employer, but only after your employer assesses the noise in the workplace, and attempts to reduce that noise level using engineering and administrative changes. If there is still a hazardous noise level remaining, then HPDs are called for.

HPDs can be of several types including earplugs, canal caps, or earmuffs.

### What must I do?

You are ultimately responsible for protecting your own hearing. Here are a few points to remember about protecting your sense of hearing:

- make sure earplugs fit properly.
- have an annual hearing test.
- keep HPDs in good condition. Obtain new ones as needed.
- wear HPDs properly as required.