

## Personal Protective Equipment: Hearing Protection

Your hearing changes as you get older, but that’s not the only thing that can affect how much you can hear. Loud noises — either sudden ones like an explosion or constant sounds like in a manufacturing plant — can also cause hearing loss. Noise is measured in decibels:

Whisper.....	20 decibels
Speech.....	50 to 70 decibels
Hair dryer.....	90 decibels
Jackhammer.....	90 decibels
Rock concert.....	100 to 120 decibels
Chainsaw.....	110 decibels
iPod on high volume.....	115 decibels
Pistol gunshot (25 feet away).....	140 decibels

Follow these basic rules for hearing protection at work, at home, and on your leisure time.

- If hearing protection is required, your company will offer different options for devices, provide training on device use, supervise the correct use of protection, and replace hearing protection that can’t be used.
- Working with the safety team, it’s everyone’s responsibility to select the right protection and wear hearing protection properly.
- Read instructions on packages and from the manufacturer regarding proper use of hearing protection equipment as each device is different.
- Some people object to wearing ear protection because they think that they won’t be able to hear warnings like alarm bells, buzzers, or sirens. Hearing protection does not completely block out sound, but it does help to filter out unwanted noise.
- Noise exposure is cumulative and includes situations at work and away from work; therefore, practice proper precautions at all times. Wearing hearing protection is a good precaution if you find an uncomfortable noise level, even if you don’t know the exact level.
- Hearing loss can also be affected by a single noise that is loud enough; therefore, wear protection when exposed to short term loud noises at home or work.
- Some hearing protection is disposable, and some can be reused. Understand proper storage and cleaning for reusable hearing protection devices, like earmuffs, to keep them in good condition.
- Report any situations where hearing protection is not available so that it can be replaced and be available at all times.