

# Preventing Occupational Noise Hazard Exposure

Employees need to understand the hazards of high noise levels and know how to select, use, and maintain hearing protections.



**High noise levels can damage hearing and cause safety problems. Loud noise, especially if it's shrill, can cause:**

- Temporary or permanent hearing loss
- Inability to hear signals and safety warnings
- Stress, poor concentration, and headaches from straining to hear

**Hearing protection devices cover or go into the ears to block noise. Never use cotton, stereo headsets, or other makeshift hearing protectors.**

**Use one of the following:**

- Earplugs are inserted in the ear canal to seal noise out
- Earmuffs are the best protectors
- Earmuffs plus earplugs may be needed in some high-noise areas

**Cooperate with efforts to reduce workplace noise exposure.**

**These efforts include:**

- Placing noisy machinery or operations in separate areas
- Lubricating and maintaining equipment to eliminate rattles and squeaks
- Replacing worn or loose machine parts
- Mounting machines on rubber to reduce vibration
- Installing sound barriers around noisy equipment
- Using sound-absorbing pads, ceiling materials, etc.
- Administrative controls, such as reducing the time an individual is exposed to high noise levels

**Inspect and care for hearing protection devices:**

- Inspect hearing protectors before each use. Report and don't use: Earmuffs that are loose, cracked, or don't seal well
- Earplugs that are cracked, misshapen, or hard and inflexible
- Wash hands thoroughly before inserting or putting on hearing protectors
- Warm, soapy water is recommended to regularly clean hearing protection devices, following manufacturers' instructions. Never use alcohol, acetone, or other chemicals.
- Store hearing protection devices where they'll stay clean and dry. If the devices are squished, the fit will be affected.

**BE AWARE OF AND REPORT HEARING PROBLEMS.**



Noise or ringing in the ears  
Trouble hearing voices or high or soft sounds  
Needing TV or radio volume so high that others complain



SELF-INSURED WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION FUND

[www.mmm-a.com](http://www.mmm-a.com)