

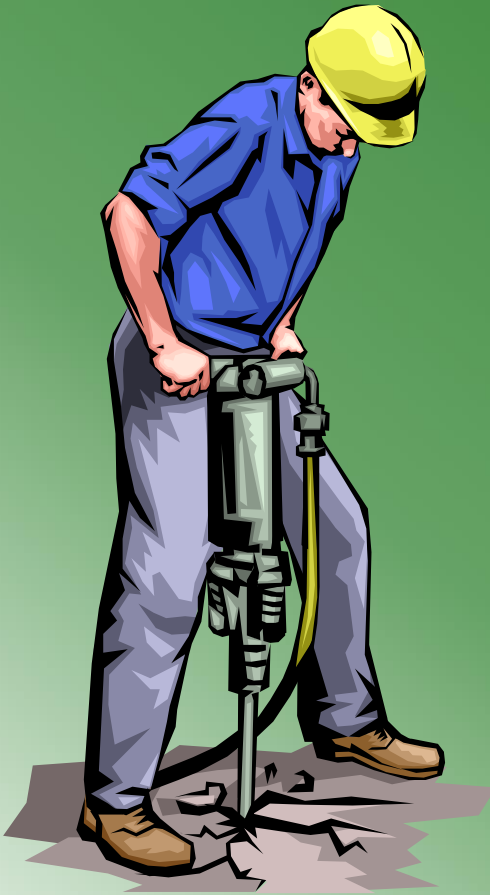
Noise Exposure At Work

- This presentation covers the topic of noise exposure at work:
- The effects of noise on hearing,
- Hearing protection – purpose, types and use,
- Purpose of audiometric testing and how it works,
- Your right to see noise measurement records and hearing test results.



Effects of Noise Exposure

What Exposure to Loud Noise Will Do



- Exposure to loud noise will inevitably cause hearing loss over time.
- Loud noise damages or destroys the nerves in the inner ear.
- Another effect can be “tinnitus” or permanent ringing in the ear.

Effects of Noise Exposure

When is Noise Too Loud?

- Noise is measured in units called “decibels” or “dB”
- If two people 3 feet apart must shout to be heard, the background noise is too loud (above 85 decibels).

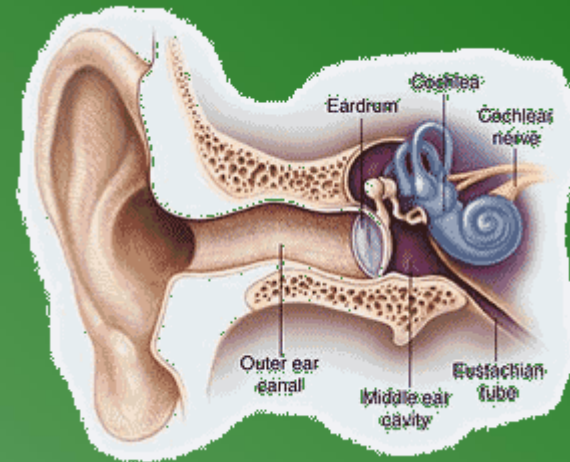
- Noise above 140 decibels causes pain and immediate hearing loss



Effects of Noise Exposure

Long Term Exposure to Noise

- Our ears can recover from short exposure to loud noise, but over time nerve damage will occur.
- The longer and louder the noise, the greater chance permanent damage will occur.
- There is really no such thing as “tough ears” or “getting used to it”.



Effects of Noise Exposure

Hearing Loss From Noise Exposure



- Hearing loss from noise exposure is usually not noticed because it is so gradual.
- Usually a person loses the ability to hear higher pitches first.
- Often the first noticeable effect is difficulty in hearing speech.
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Effects of Noise Exposure

Tinnitus From Noise Exposure

- Exposure to high noise levels can also cause permanent ringing in the ear or “tinnitus”
 - Whistling or
 - Squealing or
 - Roaring or
 - Buzzing in one or both ears.
- Severe tinnitus may disrupt sleep, reduce concentration and cause irritability and depression.



Effects of Noise Exposure

What is Too Much Noise Exposure?

- Damage from noise exposure depends on the loudness and length of exposure.
- Scientific studies have shown that hearing loss can occur when 8-hour average noise exposure **exceeds 85 decibels.**



Effects of Noise Exposure

What is Too Much Noise Exposure?

- The risk of hearing loss increases dramatically as noise levels increase.
- Exposure to noise levels above 115 decibels for even 5 minutes is very risky.
- Impact or banging noise above 140 decibels will cause immediate damage to nerves in the ear.



Effects of Noise Exposure

Daily Allowable Exposure Times to Noise

The table below shows noise levels and how long a person can be exposed without hearing protection before there is damage to the ear.

Noise Level

Allowable Exposure Time

85 decibels

8 hours

90 decibels

4 hours

100 decibels

1 hour

105 decibels

30 minutes

110 decibels

15 minutes

115 decibels

0 minutes



Noise Levels

Examples of Commonly Used Noisy Equipment

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Noise Level</u>
Back Hoe	85-95 decibels
Chain Saw	110 decibels
Front-end Loader	90-95 decibels
Gunshot	140 decibels
Jackhammer	112 decibels
Lawn Mower	90 decibels
Tractor	95-105 decibels
Circular Saw	90-100 decibels



Hearing Protection

Types of Hearing Protection

There are three types of hearing protection – ear muffs, earplugs and ear caps.

Ear muffs and earplugs provide about equal protection, ear caps somewhat less.



earmuffs



earplugs



ear caps

Hearing Protection

Types of Hearing Protectors

All hearing protectors are designed to reduce the intensity (loudness) of noise to the inner ear.

They work much better than wads of cotton or bits of cloth stuffed in the ear.

All three types have advantages and disadvantages and people vary on which they prefer to use.



Cotton doesn't work!!

Hearing Protection

Hearing Protection – Ear Plugs

Earplugs are made of foam, rubber or plastic and usually one-size-fits-all

Some are disposable, some are reusable.

They are lightweight, and require no maintenance.

They are inserted into the ear canal.



Hearing Protection

Ear Plug Comfort

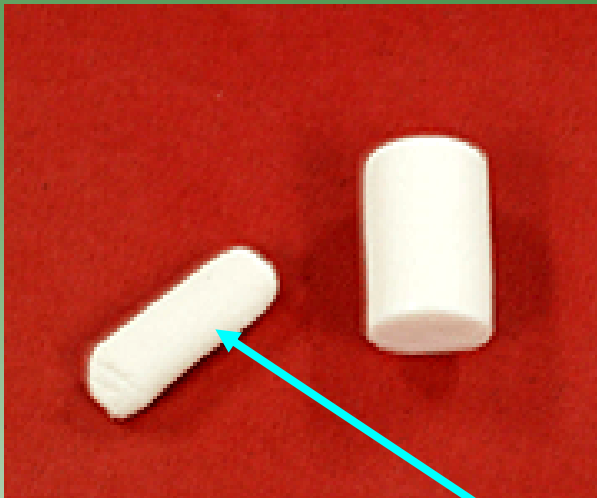
Used correctly ear plugs rarely cause infection or prolonged irritation of the ear canal.

Most people can find a comfortable fit by trying several different sizes, types or brands.

Hearing Protection

Inserting Foam Earplugs

Foam type earplugs are one-size-fits-all and must be inserted properly into the ear.



ExpierDoc® © 2018 Roll earplug into small cylinder first, then insert in ear.

Hearing Protection

Inserting Foam Earplugs



Earplug incorrectly inserted

Earplug correctly inserted

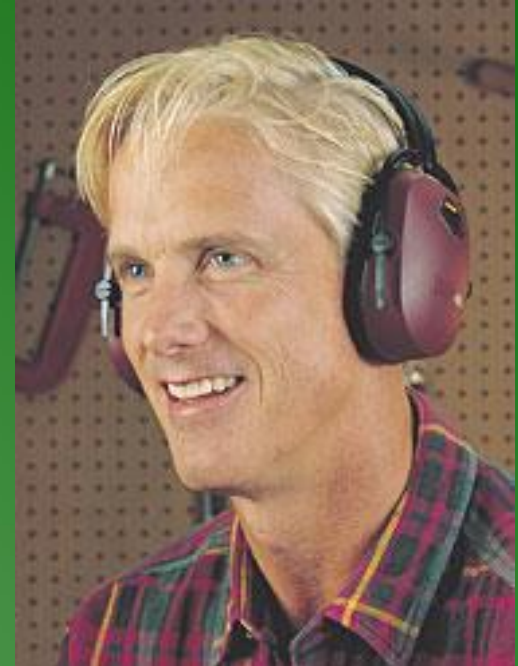
Hearing Protection

Ear Muffs

Ear muffs cover the whole ear and are preferred by some people.

Some have replaceable pads and some high-tech styles filter out specific noise pitches.

They last longer than most plugs.

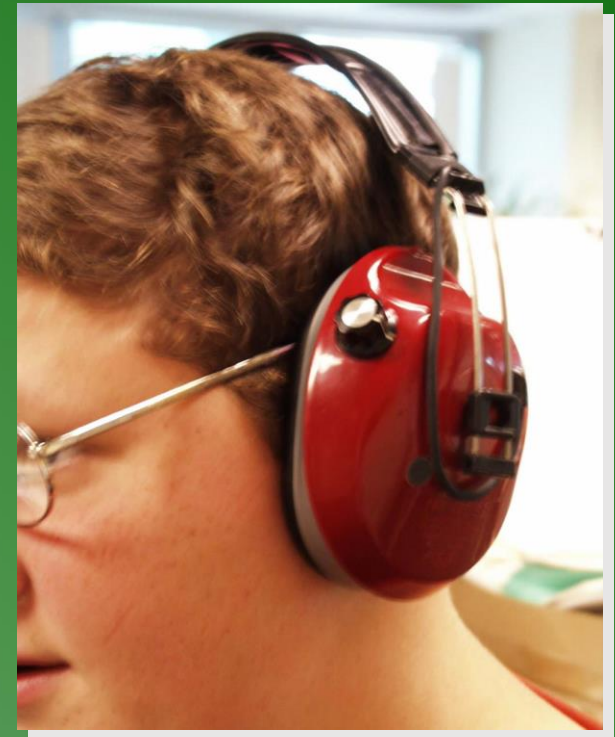


Hearing Protection

Ear Muff Comfort & Glasses

Ear Muffs can be uncomfortable in hot weather.

Ear Muffs don't seal well for someone with glasses or heavy sideburns.



Hearing Protection

Ear Caps

- Ear caps are like earplugs, except they do not go into the ear canal, they only block it.
- They are good for occasional use or for people who find earplugs uncomfortable.
- They are not as protective as earplugs or muffs.

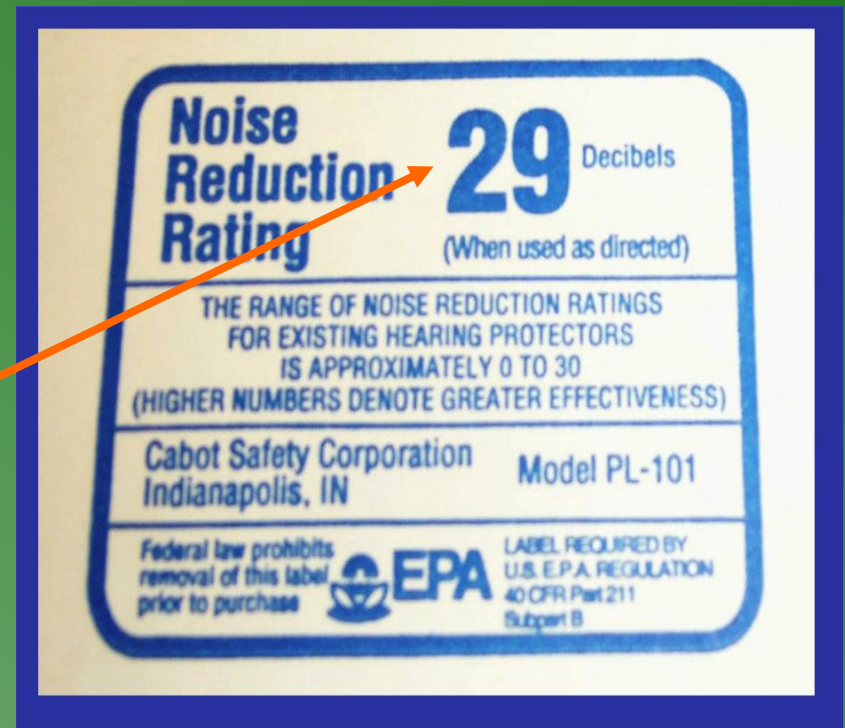


Hearing Protection

Noise Reduction of Hearing Protection

The “noise reduction rating” or “NRR” of hearing protection is measured in decibels.

The NRR is found on the earmuff or earplug package. The higher the number, the greater the protection.



Hearing Protection

How can you hear anything with earmuffs on?

Using earmuffs or plugs in noisy areas actually makes it easier to hear coworkers or machinery.

They reduce overwhelming loud background noise.

They are similar to dark glasses that reduce the sun's glare making it easier to see.



Hearing Protection

Proper Use of Hearing Protection

- Earmuffs and plugs provide good protection only when used properly.
- Sometimes people will remove hearing protection for “just a minute” in a noisy area.
- In areas of very high noise exposure, this could result in noise overexposure.

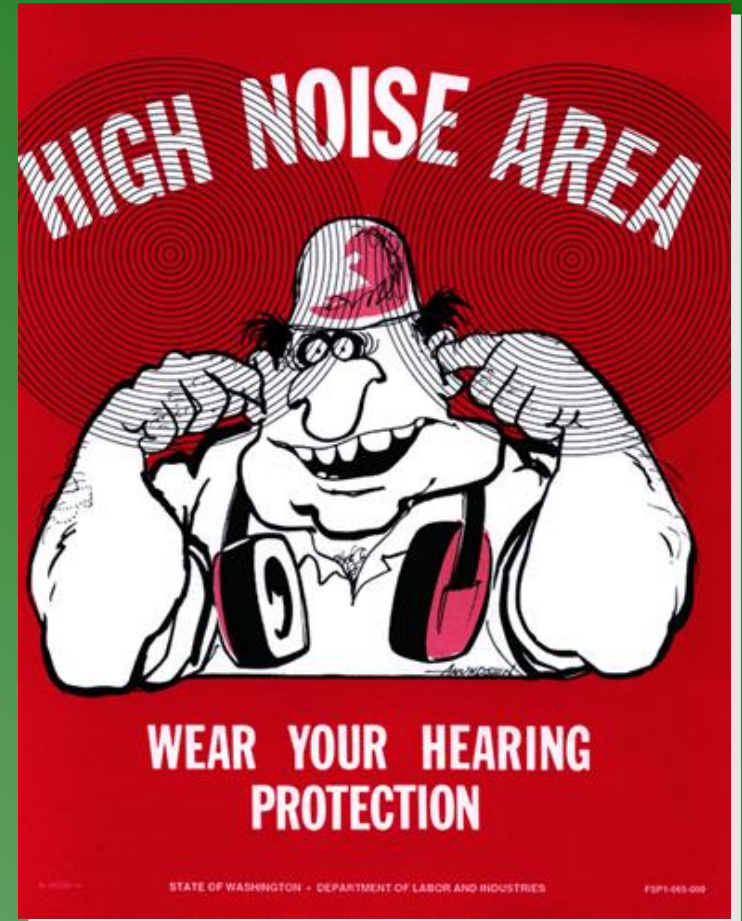


It won't protect your ears if it is around your neck!!!

Hearing Protection

Proper Use of Hearing Protection

- It takes just a few minutes of unprotected exposure at noise above 115 decibels to risk hearing damage.
- Earplugs not well inserted into the ear canal will not provide complete protection.
- Likewise, earmuffs not snug against the head will “leak” noise into the ear.



Hearing Protection

Hearing Aids Are Not Hearing Protection

- Hearing aids do not block out enough sound for most workplace noise.
- Some hearing aids can actually increase the noise level at the ear.
- Just turning off the hearing aids will not prevent further hearing loss from noise exposure.



Hearing Protection

Portable Radios/CD Players

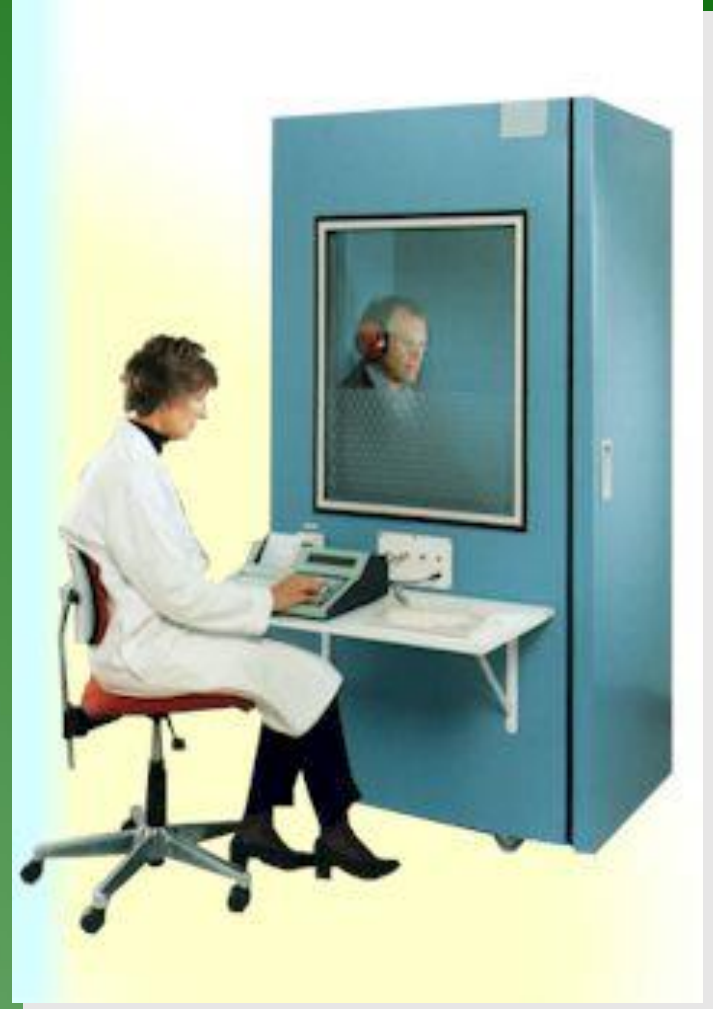
- **“Walkmans” do not provide protection from noise.**
- **The earphones are not earmuffs and the music only adds to background other noise.**
- **“Walkmans” can exceed 85 decibels alone.**



Audiometric Testing

What is Audiometric Testing?

- “Audiometric testing” is the same thing as “hearing tests”.
- It is done by trained technicians to detect any hearing loss.
- Audiometric testing is required by OSHA for any employees exposed to excessive noise.



Audiometric Testing

Purpose of Audiometric Testing

- Most of us develop a mild hearing loss as we age, especially in the higher pitches.
- A severe or significant hearing loss at a younger age may mean you have had excessive noise exposure.
- Audiometric testing done yearly can detect early stages of hearing loss.



Audiometric Testing

Purpose of Audiometric Testing

- Audiometric testing results can be used to check the following:
 - If the hearing protection in use is adequate,
 - If there is a change in noise exposure,
 - If there is a medical condition of the ear unrelated to noise exposure.



Audiometric Testing

How Does Audiometric Testing Work?

- When you are first hired, a baseline test is taken.
- The testing is repeated every year after that and compared to the baseline test result.
- If a hearing loss is detected, you will be referred to a doctor or audiologist.

