

••• *safety* •••

**hearing protection**

## Hearing Loss Is A Lonely Disability

Deafness is a lonely disability. It causes the individual to be isolated from friends, family and the community. That is a very good reason to take hearing protection seriously before it is too late. Hearing loss caused by excessive noise occurs gradually, and it is irreversible.

If you work in a noisy environment, stay alert for early signs of hearing loss. One indication is "getting used to" the noise. If the noise bothers you less, you may be hearing less.

Other signs: You are working with dangerous noise levels and there is a ringing in the ears or you experience a temporary hearing loss for a few hours after you leave work. If repeated, this temporary hearing loss can become permanent.

**Here are two simple tests to help determine if you should be wearing hearing protection in your work area:**

- Can you carry on a conversation in a normal tone? If not, the noise level may be too high.
- Are you hoarse from shouting over the noise?

It is best to remove the hazard from the worker by placing workstations further away from noisy equipment



- *Ear muffs* have cuffs which fit over the outer ear. Sometimes ear plugs and ear muffs are used together to provide added protection.

Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions in using and caring for your ear protection. Wash ear plugs with soap and water and let them dry before using them. Regularly check for any signs of wear or damage, and replace them when necessary.

If you use canal caps or ear muffs, have them refitted regularly to make sure they are still working effectively.



There are a couple of common objections to

wearing ear protection. One is that it is uncomfortable. It may take time to become accustomed to wearing ear PPE. However, if the equipment remains uncomfortable, try for a better fit. Another common objection is concern about not hearing warnings and alarms. However, hearing PPE will usually just filter out the steady unwanted racket.

Remember to protect your hearing off the job as well. Loud music on personal stereo headphones, and noisy equipment such as saws and lawnmowers are just a few of the noise hazards.

*Keep in mind that excessive noise causes hearing loss which cannot be reversed.*

or by installing sound insulation. When these improvements are not possible, you should wear Personal Protective Equipment for your ears.

**Here are the main kinds of hearing protection. Be sure to check with your safety supervisor about the right kind to use in your work environment.**

- *Ear plugs* fit right inside the ear. They are usually made of foam and may be either disposable or reusable. They are rolled up and placed in the ear. Then they expand and block out the noise.
- *Canal caps* are similar to ear plugs. However, they are pre-formed. They are often attached to a headpiece to keep them from getting lost.