

Hearing loss from loud noises can occur in a variety of workplaces and cannot be repaired. Hearing loss from exposure to loud noises can take years to show up and exposure to damaging noises usually doesn't hurt, so workers rarely know there's a problem until their hearing has already been damaged. Depending on the noise level and duration, exposure to excessive noise can also contribute to fatigue, muscle tension, high blood pressure and poor mental health outcomes.

What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury. Noise can cause hearing loss if the exposure is loud, long or frequent. Hearing loss can happen from exposure to noises louder than 85 decibels. Section 4 of the *Workplace Health Regulations* describes when controls are required to prevent hearing loss from excessive noise hazards.

Below are examples of hazards that can contribute to hearing loss. Which could happen in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Examples of hazards that could contribute to hearing loss include:

- operating a chainsaw
- working on airport tarmac
- sandblasting
- loud music in nightclub or concert
- using a hydraulic press
- working in a busy restaurant or kitchen
- using a lawn mower
- riding an all-terrain vehicle (ATV)

What can be done to protect hearing in the workplace?

The most effective way to prevent hearing loss is to eliminate the risk of being exposed to a noise hazard. Effective hazard identification, risk assessment and hazard controls can help prevent hearing loss in the workplace. Personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent hearing loss must be worn once all other methods of controlling the hazards, including elimination, substitution, engineering controls and administration controls, have been attempted.

Required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments and identify any hazards in their workplaces, including hearing loss hazards
- employers must have safe work procedures for identified hazards that cannot be eliminated
- employers must offer training to employees on safe work procedures
- employers must have procedures for reporting, investigating, and documenting incidents and injuries, and offer training to employees on those procedures

Talk leader instructions:

- This is background information ONLY.
- Be sure to customize to your organization.
- Consider printing copies of this sheet for yourself and each participant.
- Lead a discussion with your workers about the materials on this sheet.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible. Be open to questions.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Fill in the name of your organization, location and the date on your sheet. Have each worker sign your sheet to confirm their attendance.
- File your sheet in your worker records to document the Safety Talk.

- employers must put engineering controls in place where workplace noise is louder than levels described in section 4 of the *Workplace Health Regulations*
- workers must not wear hearing protection designed to accept AM/FM radio or other music sources, as described in section 5 of the *Workplace Health Regulations*
- employers must have a hearing testing program for workers exposed to excessive noise levels, as described in section 6 of the *Workplace Health Regulations*
- workers must properly wear the hearing protection provided by employers

Additional controls:

- consider mandatory use of hearing protection in high-hazard workplaces like construction, mining or mechanical
- maintain hearing protection by cleaning after use and storing where it will not be damaged
- provide hearing protection in a range of styles, shapes and sizes to meet the needs of individual workers and workplaces
- put hearing protection on before entering a noisy area and only remove after leaving or once excessive noise has been eliminated
- wear only approved hearing protection and not earbuds or headphones, which do not protect against excessive noise and can distract workers from important sounds like alarms or other warnings

Discussion questions:

1. What are potential hearing loss hazards in your workplace?
2. Which safe work procedures for hearing protection are required in your workplace?
3. Is any PPE required for hearing protection in your workplace?

More information:

If you have questions about hearing protection in your workplace, please contact:

- Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, 867-667-5450 or 1-800-661-0443 or worksafe@gov.yk.ca

Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help workplaces understand and comply with workplace health and safety laws. It is not legal advice and is not intended to replace the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act, S.Y. 2021, c.11* and *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations*.

Safety Talk record:

Print and complete this page or fill in electronically, then save as a record of your Safety Talk.

Comments/suggestions

Organization name

Safety Talk leader

Date

Safety Talk participants

print name

signature
