

According to OSHA, twenty-two million workers are exposed to potentially damaging noise at work each year. U.S. businesses pay more than \$1.5 million in penalties annually for not protecting workers from noise, and hearing loss directly impacts the quality of life not only for those workers but also their families. Workers who are exposed to high levels of noise can suffer permanent hearing loss and then sometimes not even surgery or a hearing aid can help. In addition, even repeated exposures to loud noise for just short periods of time can add up to permanent damage to hearing.

OSHA Standard 1910.95(c)(1) *The employer shall administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program... whenever employee noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average sound level (TWA) of 85 decibels... without regard to... the use of personal protective equipment.*



*Cotton stuffed into the ear as hearing protection can be very dangerous! (*5)*



*Worker using proper ear plugs. (*6)*

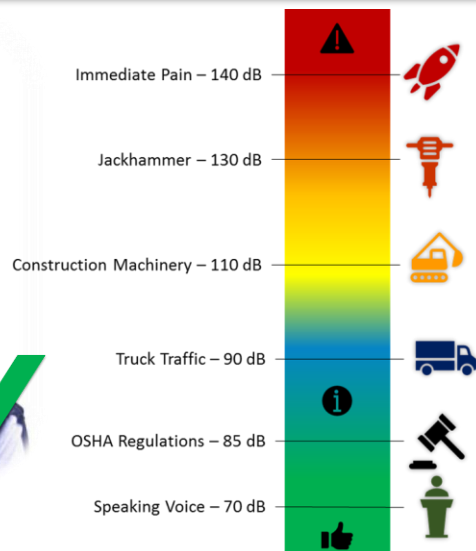


Diagram of various sound levels and examples.

OSHA Standard 1910.95(i)(1) *Employers shall make hearing protectors available to all employees exposed to an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels or greater at no cost to the employees. Hearing protectors shall be replaced as necessary.*
1910.95(i)(3) *Employees shall be given the opportunity to select their hearing protectors from a variety of suitable hearing protectors provided by the employer.*

OSHA Standard 1910.95(i)(4) *The employer shall provide training in the use and care of all hearing protectors provided to employees.* **1910.95(i)(5)** *The employer shall ensure proper initial fitting and supervise the correct use of all hearing protectors.*

Remember these important tips to avoid hearing loss while on the job:

- Workers who are exposed to high levels of noise can suffer permanent hearing loss. Workers must be protected from hazardous levels of noise.
- Workers must pay attention to all signs and warnings of potentially dangerous noise levels.
- OSHA regulations state that 85 decibels (dB) is the action level where workers may need to use hearing protection.
- Hearing protection must be provided for the level and/or range of noise that workers will be exposed to during their work hours.
- Never improvise hearing protection by stuffing cotton, tissue, wax or other items into your ears.
- Different types of devices may be used depending on the work environment as well as the hazardous noise.
- Proper personal protective equipment such as ear plugs or ear muffs must be maintained and worn correctly at all times.

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