

OCCUPATIONAL NOISE

Occupational noise is sometimes referred to as a *stealth long-term hazard* because it is a painless, gradual process.

- Hearing loss usually occurs slowly, so you may not realize it is even happening until it is too late.

It seems understandable that a one-time exposure to a sudden, powerful noise, like an explosion, can damage your hearing instantly. But it's also important to consider that prolonged exposures (day after day) to loud noise can also lead to a gradual, but permanent, loss of hearing.

- Damage to your hearing can be prevented, but once permanent noise-induced hearing loss occurs, it cannot be cured or reversed.

Workplace noise is measured using special noise monitoring equipment and the levels are displayed in decibels.

- Normal speaking voice is around 70 decibels (dB) and loud equipment can be around 110 dB.
- OSHA regulations state that 85 decibels (dB) is the action level where workers may need to use hearing protection.
- Before reaching for hearing protection, it's important to reduce, block, or eliminate occupational noise exposure if possible.

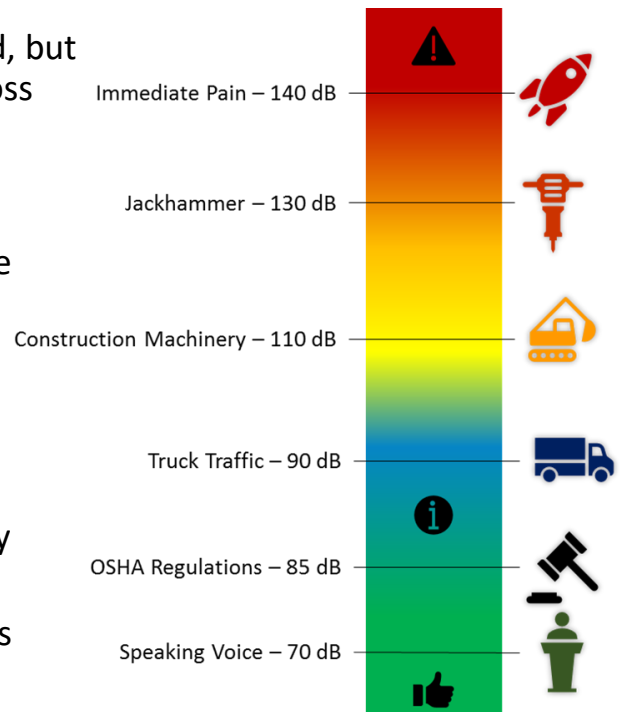


Diagram of various sound levels and examples.

When choosing hearing protection, consider the convenience, ease of use, the work environment, and the compatibility with other PPE that is required.

- The best hearing protection is a solution that is worn properly by the worker every single time they are exposed to loud noise on the job.

Discussion

Image: Weeklysafety.com

What noise levels are you typically exposed to during the course of your workday?

What hearing protection works best for you?