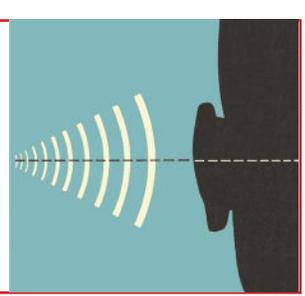


# HAZARD ALERT

CPWR  
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# NOISE AND HEARING LOSS



## Am I at risk?

You can damage—even lose—your hearing from:

- ▶ Working around loud noises (85 decibels or higher), and/or
- ▶ Exposure to paints, degreasers, cleaners, and other products that contain solvents such as toluene that damage cells that are part of the hearing process.

If you're asking others to repeat themselves at home or if you need to turn up your TV or radio at the end of the workday, you may already be suffering from hearing loss.

## What will you miss when you lose your hearing?

- ▶ On the job: Hearing your boss or co-worker alert you to a hazard.
- ▶ At home: being able to talk with your friends and family; listening to music, movies, and TV; and hearing the sounds of nature.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), approximately 1 out of 4 construction workers suffer from some level of hearing loss.

**Hearing loss cannot be reversed or cured, but hearing aids can help treat many types of hearing loss and significantly improve your ability to hear and interact with the world around you. Talk to your doctor to find out more.**



**50%** of construction workers have some job-related hearing problem, including hearing loss or ringing, whistling, buzzing, or humming in the ears (tinnitus).

**If you think you are in danger:**

Contact your supervisor.  
Contact your union.

Call OSHA  
**1-800-321-6742**

Learn more about prevent hearing loss at  
[cpwr.com/noise](http://cpwr.com/noise)



**Find out more about construction hazards.**

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics call **301-578-8500** or visit [cpwr.com/hazardalerts](http://cpwr.com/hazardalerts)

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## When you work around noise ...

### 1 Ask for controls

Noise is often measured in decibels (dBs). Using equipment just 3 dBs quieter can cut the noise energy reaching your ears by half.

Ask your employer to rent or buy low-noise equipment, or put a sound barrier around loud equipment like compressors.



Photo courtesy of NIOSH

### 2 Wear hearing protection

According to OSHA, your employer must provide you with hearing protection when you work around loud noise.\* Types of hearing protection include earplugs and earmuffs.

Make sure your hearing protection fits and is comfortable. The louder the job, the more hearing protection you need. Look at the Noise Reduction Rating of your earplugs or earmuffs to determine the level of sound they block out.



Worker using earplugs for hearing protection.

\*Source: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – 29 CFR 1926.101

### 3 Get trained and tested

Your employer should train you how to:

- ▶ Measure noise levels and recognize when they are too high,
- ▶ Use different methods and solutions to reduce noise exposure, and
- ▶ Use PPE (hearing protection).



Worker taking a hearing test.

\*The hearing test is called an audiometric test.

An annual hearing test will let you know if your hearing is getting worse.\*

## Noise is bad for your safety...

- ▶ Even without hearing loss, noise can distract you and make it hard to hear others.
- ▶ Hearing loss means you may not hear warnings.
- ▶ Hearing loss increases your risk of falling.

## And bad for your health!

- ▶ Noise exposure can cause “tinnitus”, or ringing in the ears, which can interfere with focus and sleep.
- ▶ Noise and hearing loss can cause high blood pressure and unnecessary stress.
- ▶ Studies show that moderate to severe hearing loss may lead to dementia in older adults. Fortunately, those who used hearing aids were less likely to have dementia.\*



**If you have to raise your voice to be heard by someone an arm's length away, your hearing is in danger.**

\*Source: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2800197>