HAZARD ALERT

NOISE AND HEARING LOSS

What?
You can damage – even lose – your hearing from working:

- Around loud noises (85 decibels or higher); and/or
- With paints, degreasing, cleaning, and other construction products that contain solvents such as toluene.

If you have to ask others to repeat themselves, or if you need to turn your TV or radio up 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: The ability to communicate with friends and family

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.

Once your hearing is gone, it’s gone forever.

When you work around noise...

1. Ask for controls

- Noise is measured in decibels (dBs). Using equipment just 3 dBs lower 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.

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.

3. Get trained and tested

- Your employer should train you on how to:
  - Protect your hearing; and
  - Use hearing protection.

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

Noise is bad for your safety and health

- Noise can distract you.
- You may not hear warnings.
- Hearing loss increases your risk of falling.
- Years of noisy job sites can make you deaf.

Noise can cause “tinnitus”, or ringing in the ears, which can interfere with your sleep. Noise can cause high blood pressure and stress.

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

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*THE HEARING TEST IS CALLED AN AUDIOMETRIC TEST.

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