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Deafness Is A Lonely Disability



A person with a hearing disability misses hearing the things we all enjoy – like music, laughter and the sounds of nature. Because communication is difficult, those with a hearing disability tend to become isolated from other people.

Excessive noise can gradually destroy hearing. In fact, damage is so gradual; you may not realize it is happening. People who work regularly in noisy environments believe they “get use to” the noise. But if the noise is bothering them less that’s a sure sign of hearing loss.

Another early warning of dangerous noise levels is ringing in the ears. So is reduced hearing for the first few hours after leaving a noisy job. As hearing loss progresses, the ear does not recover its full abilities before the person returns to work the next day, and more damage is inflicted.

While there are a lot of methods of measuring noise levels, here are a couple of simple ones. If you cannot carry on a normal conversation because of noise in the work area, or if you find you are hoarse from shouting over the noise, then chances are you are exposed to too much noise.

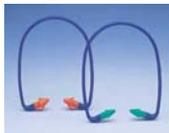
Noise, can sometimes be reduced by working further away from machinery or by installing insulation or other engineering controls that reduce it. If you think this applies to your work area, suggest it to your supervisor.

You can protect yourself from noise by using **Personal Protective Equipment** for your ears. There are three main kinds. If you’re not sure which you should use in your work area, ask for advice.

- **Ear plugs**, either reusable or disposable, are made of foam. The user rolls them up and places them in the ear, where they expand to seal out noise.



- **Canal caps**, are pre-formed ear plugs, often attached to a headpiece so they won’t get lost



- **Ear muffs**, have cuffs fitting over the outer ear.



Other types of ear protection are also available for special circumstances, such as ear muffs attached to hard hats. For really noisy areas, ear plugs and ear muffs are worn at the same time.



Take care of your ear protection, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Wash ear plugs with soap and water, you should allow them to dry thoroughly before using them. Check for signs of wear and replace if necessary.

Have canal caps and ear muffs refitted periodically to make sure they are still working properly. Don't store your ear muffs outdoors; you might get a surprise if a wasp has decided to take up residence inside them.

Some people object to wearing ear protection because they think they will not be able to hear warnings or alarm bells. This is not the case because the ear protection will usually filter out the steady unwanted noise.

Some people find ear protection uncomfortable. It does take some getting used to, but if it is really uncomfortable, try another device or try to get a better fit. Ask for advice.

Industrial workplaces aren't the only threat to your hearing. Noise hazards exist everywhere – this includes traffic, office and home computer printers, personal stereo systems and lawn mowers.

**Safety Tip: Take care of your ears wherever you are.
Use hearing protection on and off the job.
Hearing loss occurs gradually and it can't
be reversed.**