

# Workplace Hearing Safety Guide

## What You Need to Know About Workplace Noise

Noise is one of the most common workplace hazards, and exposure to levels of 85 dBA or higher can cause permanent hearing damage, even if you don't notice it. The Occupational Health and Safety General Regulations require employers to provide hearing protection and audiometric testing when noise exceeds this limit. Workplaces must also have a Hearing Conservation Program, which includes noise monitoring, education, hearing protection, and regular hearing tests to help protect your long-term hearing



## Why Hearing Health Matters

Hearing plays an important role in communication, awareness, safety, and overall quality of life. Long-term exposure to loud noise can lead to permanent reversible hearing loss, ringing or buzzing in the ears (tinnitus), difficulty understanding conversations, and increased fatigue or stress.

## Reducing Noise Hazards in the Workplace

The workplace first looks for ways to reduce noise at the source before relying on hearing protection. This follows the hierarchy of controls, which focuses on fixing or lowering the noise whenever possible. Noise-reduction measures may include:

- replacing or isolating loud machinery
- adding sound-absorbing panels, curtains, or barriers
- making sure equipment is well-maintained and quieter over time
- rotating or adjusting work tasks so no one is exposed for too long

If you ever have questions about noise levels in your work area or how to use hearing protection properly, your supervisor or safety representative can help.

## Did You Know?

A poor hearing test result does not put your employment at risk, as hearing tests are used for health and safety purposes not for employment decisions. This is a common misconception, and it can prevent workers from reporting concerns early. Identifying changes in hearing helps us take action to protect your long-term health and safety.

## Protect Your Hearing

You play an important role in protecting your long-term hearing health:

- Wear hearing protection in designated noise areas, where sound levels may exceed safe limits.
- Ensure your hearing protection fits properly. Earplugs and earmuffs must seal correctly to provide effective protection.
- Report unusually loud equipment or changes in noise levels so potential hazards can be addressed promptly.
- Participate in audiometric testing to help identify early changes in your hearing.
- Follow posted signage and safe work procedures, as these measures are designed to support your safety and prevent noise-related injuries.



# Noise in the Canadian Workplace

The surest method of preventing noise-induced hearing loss is to eliminate the source or to reduce noise at the source

Low or moderate noise levels can cause annoyance and stress, and make it difficult for people to complete tasks, or talk to and hear one another. Loud noises can cause permanent hearing loss and risk worker safety.



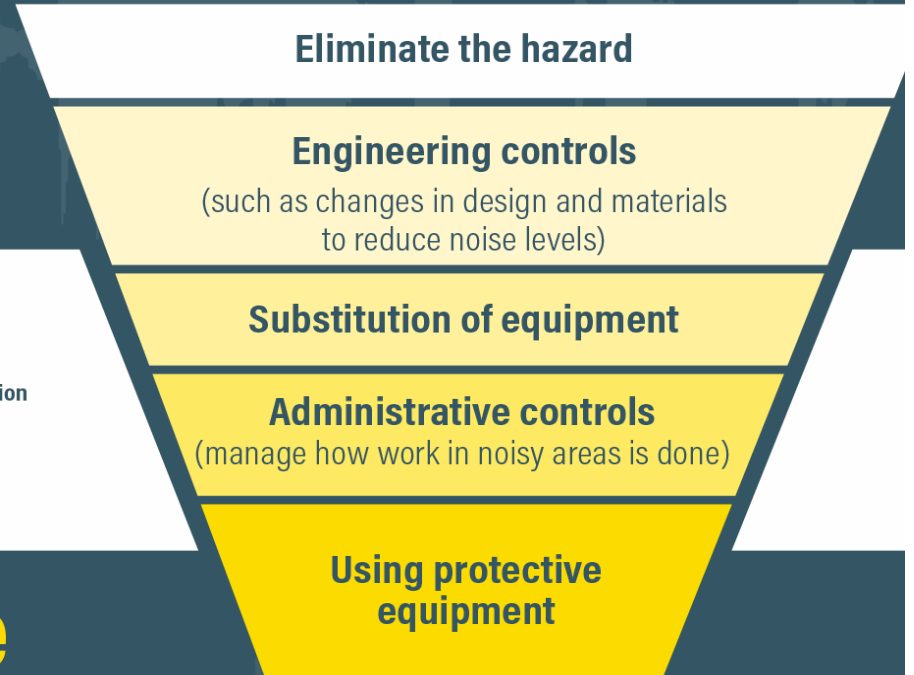
## Promote hearing conservation

- Have managers and supervisors set an example by wearing hearing protection devices whenever required
- Acknowledge good hearing conservation practices
- Be proactive and look for ways to eliminate or reduce noise exposure
- Encourage workers to report noise hazards
- Offer audiometric tests and the opportunity to ask questions



### What's in a hearing conservation program

- Noise assessment
- Hearing protector selection
- Employee training and education
- Audiometric testing
- Maintenance
- Inspection
- Record keeping
- Program evaluation



## Make sure hearing protection is:



**Correct for the job.**

Refer to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard Z94.2-14.



**Compatible with other required personal protective equipment or communication devices.**



**Comfortable enough to be accepted and worn.**



**Appropriate for the temperature and humidity in the workplace.**



### Noise Source.....dB(A)

Hand-held circular saw (1 m)	115
Textile room	103
Power lawnmower (1 m)	92
Diesel truck at 50 kph (20 m)	85
Passenger car at 60 kph (20 m)	65
Conversation (1 m)	60
Quiet room	40



What the law says: Eight jurisdictions require a hearing conservation program when noise either exceeds their occupational exposure limit (BC, NL, PE, Federal), 85dBA (NT, NU, SK) or when there is excess noise (AB). However, all employers have a duty to provide a safe work environment and take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of employees and others in the workplace.

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