



HEARING PROTECTION

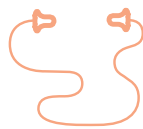
Hearing protection is the least effective control measure, and should only be considered once all options to eliminate the noise at source or minimise the exposure to noise have been exhausted. You must provide hearing protection in your work if it is needed to manage noise risks, and train your workers on how to use it correctly.

What is hearing protection?

Hearing protection is equipment that protects your ears from exposure to loud noise. It comes in two forms:



EARMUFFS



EARPLUGS

What are your responsibilities?

First, you must try to eliminate or minimise the source of noise. You can do this by using quieter equipment, using noise insulated equipment (such as silence compressors), putting the noisy machinery away from workers or outside or rotating workers between noisy and quiet jobs.

If you're not reasonably able to eliminate or minimise the noise, you must:

- **Provide your workers with hearing protection appropriate for the levels of noise in your work.** Make sure that it provides enough protection, and is suitable for each worker's environment or location. Talk to a competent person to find out what hearing protection is right for your work. A competent person is someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience in appropriate techniques, procedures and interpreting results (eg an occupational hygienist).

- **Make sure that your workers are correctly wearing and using the hearing protection when needed.**
- **Keep hearing protection clean and well maintained.** It must be maintained, repaired or replaced so it continues to minimise the risk of hearing loss. Replace worn or damaged hearing protection promptly. Your workers must tell you if their hearing protection needs replacing.
- **Store** the hearing protection correctly so it doesn't get damaged.
- **Make sure the hearing protection is compatible with any other personal protective equipment your workers may be required to wear.** For example, wearing ear muffs over a beanie or hat will break the seal of the muffs, and the protection will be ineffective.
- **Make sure the hearing protection is a good fit for your workers.** Workers need to feel comfortable when wearing the hearing protection you provide. Involve your workers when choosing different types of hearing protection. Think about how long your workers will be wearing the protection for.
- **Not charge your workers for the hearing protection.** Workers can choose to provide their own hearing protection, but you need to check that it offers the right protection for the noise levels in your work.

Educate your workers about noise



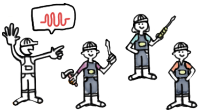
Check your workers' understanding and prior knowledge about Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) and hearing protection.



Explain the importance of hearing protection.



Explain when and where to use the hearing protection.



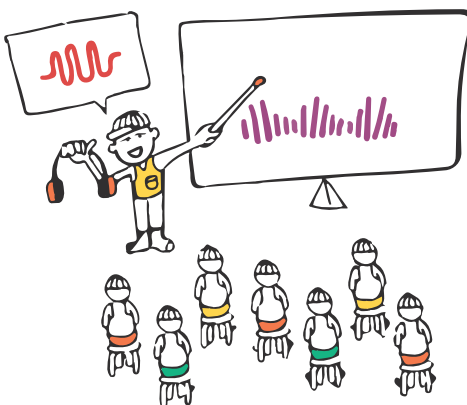
Describe how to clean, store and maintain the hearing protection.



Demonstrate how it works and involve your workers in this process.



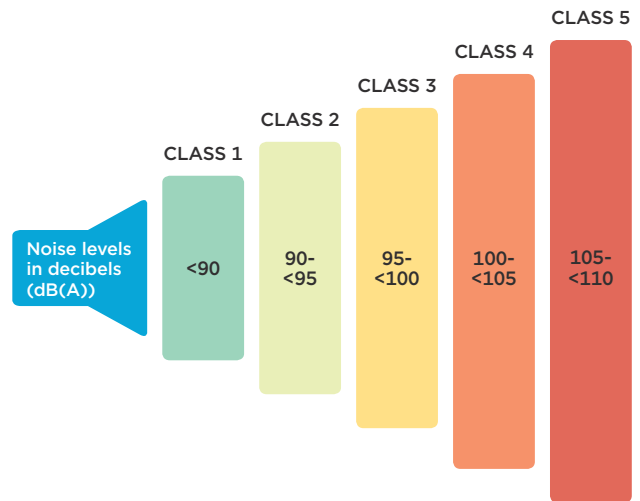
Provide volunteers and any visitors to your work site with training on how to use hearing protection.



Which hearing protection is suitable for your work?

Hearing protection comes in five different classes. The class of hearing protection to use will depend on the noise level in your work. The higher the noise level, the higher the class of the hearing protection. It's important that your workers wear the correct class of hearing protection, because it is specially designed to protect workers from specific levels of noise over specific timeframes.

The figure below illustrates the hearing protection classes:



A competent person can measure the noise levels in your work and tell you which hearing protection is appropriate for your workers. You can find a competent person [here](#)

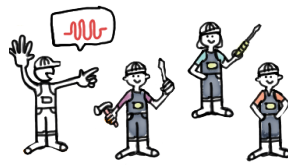
What else do you need to do to protect your workers?



Make sure that your workers are not exposed to noise levels equivalent to 85db(A) (decibels) over 8 hours, or peak noise levels of 140 db(A).



Talk to a competent person to check if a noise assessment is needed if you're unsure of the noise levels at your work, or if your workers have been exposed to hazardous noise levels.



Use signs to identify areas where the noise risk exists and where hearing protection must be worn. This includes having signs on tools and equipment that show hearing protection must be worn when operating it.



Warn your workers when noisy work will be happening, so they can move away or wear hearing protection.

Get your workers involved

Ensure your workers know how to make suggestions, ask questions or raise concerns.

Always ask your workers for input on identifying noise risks and how to eliminate or minimise them. Workers are more likely to take responsibility and make good decisions when they have been involved in the conversation.

Always train your workers on what the key risks are and how to protect their hearing.

What are the barriers that might stop your workers from wearing hearing protection?

I don't think my work is noisy

What's the answer?

Even if your work is not consistently noisy, your hearing can still be damaged from a single loud noise exposure.

The hearing protection isn't comfortable

What's the answer?

Make sure the hearing protection is a good fit for your workers. Involve your workers when selecting the hearing protection.

My hearing is already damaged – what's the point?

What's the answer?

It's never too late to protect your hearing, even if it is partially damaged. If you need hearing aids in the future, they will only be effective if you have some hearing left. Hearing protection will conserve the hearing that remains.