

How loud is it?

How to prevent hearing loss for workers in shipbuilding

Have you ever had your ears ring or feel plugged after leaving a loud environment, like a worksite or a concert? While your ears might feel like they're back to normal the next day, your hearing may have already been damaged. If you are exposed to noise over and over, you are at risk of permanent hearing loss. That's why it's so important to protect your hearing when you are working in noisy environments.

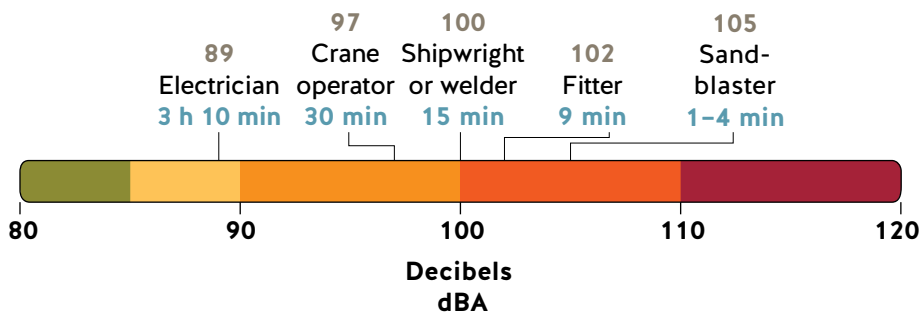
How noise affects your hearing

Noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most common workplace health problems. It is permanent and irreversible. It usually happens gradually, and you probably won't notice it in the early stages. Hearing loss can also be caused by a single event, such as an explosion, but most cases are caused by long-term exposure to loud noise from machinery, processes, and equipment.

Hearing loss can happen when you're exposed to noise louder than 85 decibels. It's painless, so you may not realize something is wrong until it's too late. If you have to raise your voice to be heard by someone an arm's length (one metre) away, the noise level is likely hazardous.

Noise on the job in shipbuilding

The graph below shows the decibel levels for typical jobs in a shipbuilding workplace. It also shows the maximum amount of time you can spend doing this work without hearing protection before you are at risk of permanent hearing loss.



Remember that it's your employer's responsibility to measure and reduce workplace noise. If the noise can't be reduced to safe levels, you'll need to wear hearing protection.



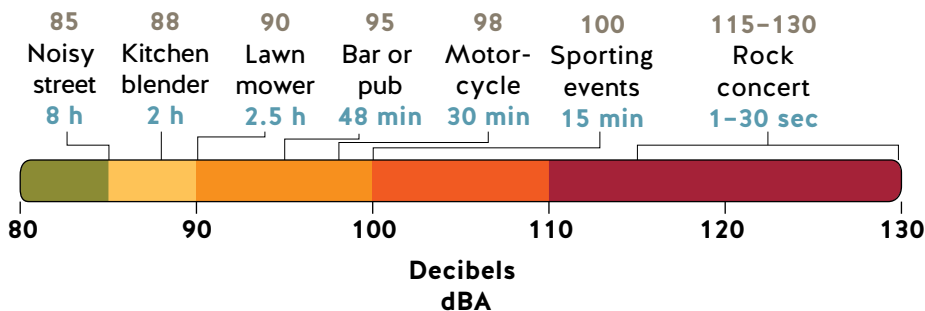
Did you know?

- In the last 10 years, approximately **1 out of every 165 workers** in the shipbuilding industry has filed a claim for noise-induced hearing loss.

Noise off the job

The damage that noise does to your hearing is cumulative. That means that if you are exposed to noise on the job, hearing damage can be made even worse if you are exposed to noise off the job as well.

The following graph shows some examples of common sources of noise in our everyday lives. It also shows the maximum amount of time you should spend near them without hearing protection to avoid permanent hearing loss.

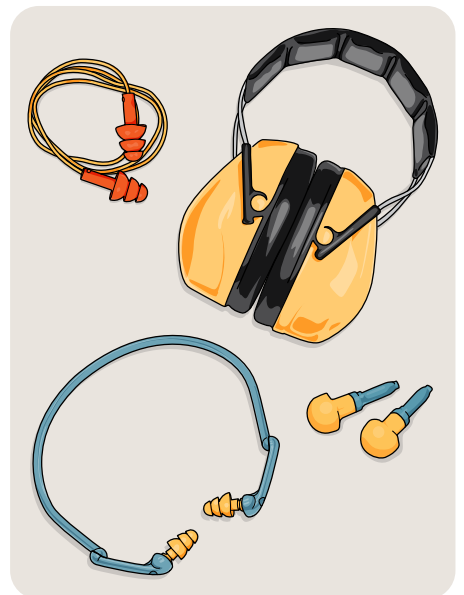


Hearing protection

Your employer is responsible for controlling hazardous noise in the workplace, preferably by eliminating the source or reducing the noise level. If that's not possible, you will have to use **hearing protection**.

Hearing protection comes in many styles, shapes, and sizes. When it comes to hearing protection, keep the following things in mind:

- Your employer is responsible for providing you with hearing protection that fits properly, feels comfortable, and is suitable for the environment you're working in. Your employer must also tell you when and how to use hearing protection.
- You are responsible for wearing hearing protection when it is required.
- Hearing protection should be comfortable, compatible with other types of personal protective equipment (PPE), and still allow for communication.
- Be sure you're protected for the entire time you're exposed to noise. This means wearing hearing protection before you enter a noisy area and only removing it once you're away from the noise.
- If earplugs are your hearing protection, make sure they fit properly and are inserted correctly. Here's a good rule of thumb: Someone facing you shouldn't be able to see the compressible foam earplugs you're wearing if they're in properly. And remember that one size doesn't fit all.



- Earbuds and headphones designed for listening to music don't provide hearing protection. In addition, listening to music, podcasts, or anything else on a portable device while working can distract you from other important sounds, such as approaching machinery, alarms, or warnings from other workers.
- Your annual hearing test is your way of knowing whether your hearing protection is working. If your test shows that you have signs of noise-induced hearing loss, talk to your supervisor or employer about ways to improve the hearing conservation program at your workplace to better protect your hearing.

If you haven't received hearing protection yet and you think you need it, or you don't know how to wear the protection you've been given, be sure to ask your supervisor or employer.

For more information

Visit worksafebc.com/hearing-loss-prevention for more resources on the topic.

Did you know?

- From 2010 to 2019, there have been **191 claims** related to noise-induced hearing loss in the shipbuilding industry.
- The average age at which workers in shipbuilding operations file a claim for hearing loss is **66 years old**.