

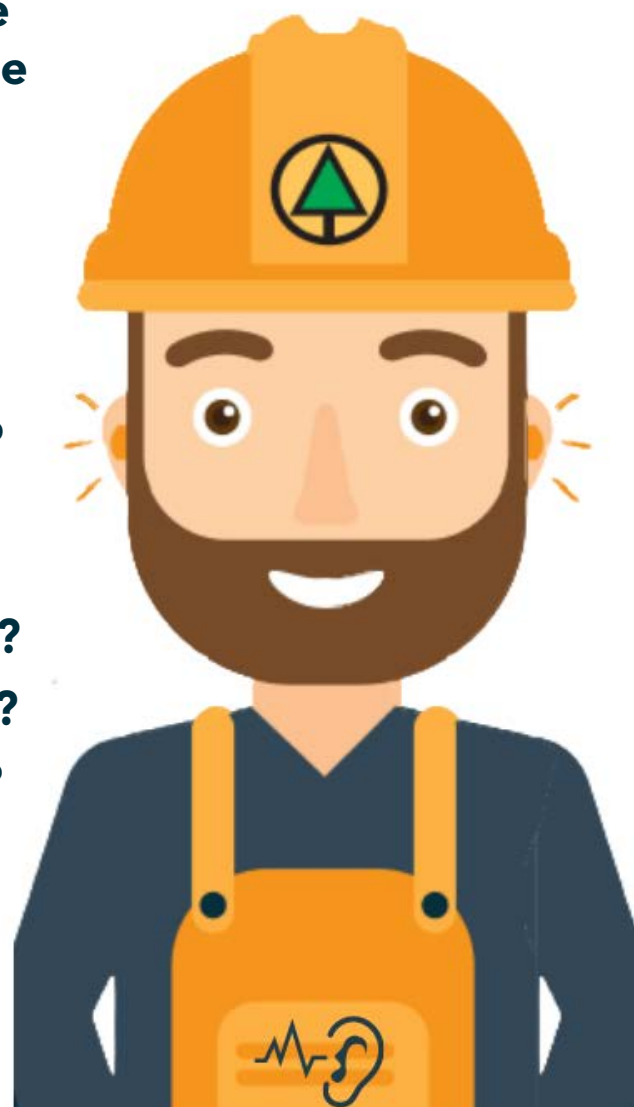
# HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss isn't easily noticed but over time, constant exposure to loud noises decreases hearing ability. Damage typically occurs deep inside the ear where it cannot be seen and there is no pain.

Prolonged exposure to noise exceeding 85 decibels (dB) (about the same noise volume as a vacuum cleaner) can cause permanent hearing loss. In workplaces with hazardous noise levels, annual hearing tests are essential.

## HEARING DAMAGE ADDS UP OVER TIME

- What are the main characteristics of hearing loss?
- What are the associated risks?
- What are preventative steps?



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# Hearing Loss in the Workplace



## Key Characteristics of Hearing Loss - Signs and Symptoms:

- Muffled speech and other sounds.
- Difficulty hearing consonants.
- Frequently asking others to speak more slowly, clearly and loudly.
- Needing to turn up the volume of the television or radio.
- Difficulty hearing when using the phone.
- Unable to identify sound direction.
- Difficulty understanding higher pitched voices.

## Associated Risk - Examples of Types of Noise Exposure that can Affect Your Hearing:

- Percussion tools—chisels, punches, meat pounders
- Pneumatic tools—air powered tools
- Hammering
- Acoustic Trauma—injury to the inner ear that occurs after exposure to a single, very loud noise or from exposure to noises at significant decibels over a longer period of time.
- Ototoxicants—toxins, chemicals or pharmaceuticals that affect hearing. They affect the inner ear through the bloodstream and cause injury to inner parts of the ear and connected neural pathways. (such as solvents, heavy metals, asphyxiates, some antibiotics and diuretics).

## Preventative Steps - Wear Hearing Protection when Exposed to Noise Levels:

- More than 85 dBA for 8 hours
- More than 88 dBA for 4 hours
- More than 91 dBA for 2 hours
- ✓ Try to eliminate the exposure to the loud noise. If this can not be done, follow the hierarchy of control.
- ✓ Use PPE such as ear plugs, ear muffs, canal caps or a combination of each depending on the level of the noise.
- ✓ Ensure noise hazard areas are identified and have warning signage.
- ✓ Wear employer provided hearing protection when entering noise hazard areas.
- ✓ Take an annual audiometric test



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