

## *Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention*

As you probably already know, your workplace -and the world—can be a very noisy place. From equipment to vehicles, there may be many different sources of noise in your work environment. Unfortunately, too much noise can lead to hearing damage and loss. To identify whether or not your workplace is potentially hazardous to your hearing, keep in mind two general rules:

1. If you have to raise your voice to speak to someone an arm's length away, the noise is likely to be at a hazardous level.
2. If your ears ring or noise seems flat and dull after leaving a noise environment, you were likely exposed to a hazardous level of noise.

Given the potentially seriousness of exposure to noise, the most important—and crucial—step that you take is to use Hearing Protection Devices (HPD), most commonly used are earplugs made of expandable foam or earmuffs with rigid cups and soft cushions. Be aware that these devices are most effective when they are properly sized and fitted. Don't hesitate to ask others for help if needed.

To ensure that an earmuff is properly fitted, adjust the headband so that it sits comfortably on your head and the cushions provide even pressure over your ears. Make sure that your hair is not in the way of the cushions, as they should fully enclose the ears.

To properly fit a foam earplug, roll and compress the earplug, and insert the earplug into your ear canal. The plug should expand in your ear canal, and you should notice a reduction in your surrounding noise level.

Hearing loss can happen gradually over time, or from a single exposure such as an explosion, although the sudden loss is not as common. Hearing loss can not only affect your job performance, cause stress and other health-related problems such as increased heart rate, but also potentially lead to accidents or injuries on the job. Always be sure to wear properly fitted Hearing Protection Devices when appropriate, and get your hearing checked regularly if you have any questions or doubts. Your ears will thank you!

The above information is not a substitute for professional medical advice and is for general informational purposes only. Consult a physician in all matters relating to your health, particularly in matters that may require diagnosis or medical attention. Any action taken as a result of the information provided above is taken at your own discretion.

