

USFK Safety Gram



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Hearing Loss is a Lonely Disability

You need sound to understand the world around you and to communicate with other people. Sounds tell you a lot about your environment. We rely on our ability to hear what other people are saying. That is a very good reason hearing protection seriously. Hearing loss caused by excessive noise occurs gradually, and it is irreversible.



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If you work in a noisy environment, stay alert for early signs of hearing loss. One indication is "getting used to" the noise. If the noise bothers you less, you may be hearing less. Other signs: You are working with dangerous noise levels and there is a ringing in the ears or you experience a temporary hearing loss for a few hours after you leave work. If repeated, this temporary hearing loss can become permanent.

Here are two simple tests to help determine if you should be wearing hearing protection in your work area:

- ◆ Can you carry on a conversation in a normal tone? If not, the noise level may be too high.
- ◆ Are you hoarse from shouting over the noise?

Here are some ways to protect your hearing:

- ◆ As much as possible, remove yourself from noisy areas. In workplaces, loud machinery should be enclosed or otherwise separated from workers. Equipment should be kept in good repair so it runs more quietly. Alternatives to loud equipment and processes should be explored.
- ◆ You should receive regular hearing checks to determine if your hearing is being damaged. Be sure to co-operate with your employer's hearing test program for your own safety.
- ◆ Wear the hearing protection recommended for your job. For many work situations, this will mean disposable foam earplugs. Ear plugs fit right inside the ear. They are usually made of foam and may be either disposable or reusable. They are rolled up and placed in the ear. Then they expand and block out the noise.
- ◆ Another type of earplug is made of hard plastic and is called a canal cap. Canal caps are similar to ear plugs. However, they are pre-formed. They are often attached to a headpiece to keep them from getting lost.
- ◆ For greater noise hazards, earmuffs are used. Ear muffs have cuffs which fit over the outer ear. Sometimes earplugs and earmuffs are used together to provide added protection.

- ◆ Maintain your hearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) according to the manufacturer's directions. Use mild soap and water to wash your ear protectors regularly.

- ◆ Protect your hearing off the job, too. Use hearing PPE when working around noisy gasoline engines such as motorcycles and lawn mowers. Wear the appropriate PPE for recreational activities such as target shooting. Don't sit too close to the amplifiers at musical events, and keep the volume down on personal stereo headphones.

Noise-induced hearing loss occurs gradually, but it is permanent. Hearing loss is a lonely disability, which isolates you from family, friends, and co-workers. The time to protect your hearing is now!

