

TOOL BOX TALK

NOISE PROTECTION

Noise is a soundwave picked up by tiny hairs within the inner ear. The movement of these hairs triggers the auditory nerve allowing the brain to interpret specific types of sound. Exposure to prolonged and loud noise can cause changes to your hearing, changes that include permanent hearing loss. The correct use of hearing protection is designed to eliminate the risk of hearing loss.

What is Noise Induced Hearing Loss?

The volume of noise determines how much the hairs in your ear move. Hairs may sway in response to conversational noise whilst loud noise causes the hairs to flatten. Hair that is flattened fails to respond to soundwaves, fails to trigger the auditory nerve and the brain fails to interpret sound. This is known as hearing loss, of which there are 2 types:

- Short term hearing loss occurs with exposure to loud noise (above 105dBA) over a short duration. The louder the noise and the greater the exposure, the greater the hearing loss. As the hairs in your ear stand back up, hearing is restored
- Permanent hearing loss occurs when the hair in your inner ear is exposed to loud and prolonged noise. With repeated loud and sustained noise, these hairs gradually fail to stand back up. This results in a gradual hearing loss that is hard to notice and not reversible

Permanent hearing loss has a number of effects. These include:

- Ringing in the ears. This may come and go or be constant
- Trouble hearing conversational noise, especially the higher frequency voices of children
- Irritability associated with ongoing and distracting noise
- Relationship issues as a result of constantly asking a partner to repeat themselves

Avoiding Hearing Loss with Ear Plugs

For most workplaces disposable ear plugs are sufficient to eliminate the risk of hearing loss noise. The expanding foam provides a sufficient buffer for noise up to 105dBA when fitted correctly. The following points should be followed when using disposable ear plugs:

- They are single use and disposable after use
- Roll the domed end of the ear plug to a point. Gently pull down on the lobe of your ear and insert the ear plug into the canal of your ear. The plug will expand blocking the ear canal

How to report a Health & Safety Issue or Concern

Do not think because you may be new on site that you should not report a hazard.

To report any health & safety concern or hazard please contact the Hays Health and Safety team by calling 1800 786 057 (Australia) or 0800 562 669 (option 4) (New Zealand). Alternatively, if you prefer you can also report this by speaking to your Hays consultant. Hays will always work to ensure that your safety comes first and so will take the necessary steps required to safeguard this. All calls are confidential, your identity will not be divulged without your specific prior consent.

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