

Noise at Work

Noise is part of everyday life, but too much noise can cause permanent and disabling hearing damage. This can be hearing loss that gets worse over time, damage caused by sudden, extremely loud noises, or tinnitus (permanent ringing in the ears).

Protecting yourself from hearing damage while you are at work, should be a primary concern.

There are two main causes of damage to hearing; Long term exposure to loud noise such as in an engineering workshop or metal fabricators and exposure to one-off loud bangs or extreme noise, such as mine workers or shot blasters in a quarry.

Key Facts

Noise becomes hazardous when it occurs at high levels or continues for a long time.

In 2018/19 an estimated 21,000 individuals who worked in the last 12 months were suffering hearing problems which they believed to be work-related, according to the Labour Force Survey. The Health and Safety Executive states that although hearing loss caused by work is preventable, you must realise that once your hearing has gone, it won't come back.

Although for many, total hearing loss is a result of damage, thousands of others suffer from tinnitus, a permanent ringing in the ears

Hints and Tips

- As a rule of thumb, it should be possible to hold a conversation with someone around 1 metre away from you without shouting.
- Help your employer to do what is needed to protect your hearing. Make sure that any equipment or systems provided for your protection are used.
- Wear any hearing protection you are given and ensure it is worn properly. Your employer or their representative should show you how to do this.
- Look after your hearing protection. If it gets damaged or worn out, ensure it is replaced immediately.
- If you detect any problems with your hearing protection, let your employer or line manager know.



Do...

- Take your breaks in a quiet place.
- Keep as far away from sources of extreme noise as possible.
- Have your hearing checked from time to time.
- Wear hearing protection if it has been provided for you.
- Be aware of mandatory signage about wearing ear protection.

Don't...

- Work in a noisy environment for longer than you have to.
- Wear poorly fitting, damaged or dirty hearing protection.
- Think that one-off loud bangs will not cause you hearing problems.