Nobody sees **hearing loss** coming



Turn down the risk

Noise-induced hearing loss:
Information for employers, health and safety representatives, and workers

ReturntoWorkSA

Government of South Australia
SafeWork SA

Recognise the risk

Hazardous noise and vibrations may come from machinery, tools, vehicles, alarms, impact noise or repeated exposure across a shift.

Other common workplace factors that contribute to the risk of hearing loss are exposure to vibration and/or ototoxic substances (chemicals that can cause damage to the auditory system).



Scan for resources, fact sheets and checklists from SafeWork SA to help identify and manage noise risks and protect your workplace.

Employers

Control the noise before it causes harm

- [x] Identify noisy tasks, equipment and work areas
- [x] Ask a competent person to assess noise exposure and which workers may be at risk
- [x] Control noise where possible through quieter equipment, maintenance, isolation, barriers or changes to work processes
- [x] Make hearing protection mandatory where it is required, and ensure it is the appropriate level of protection, available, fitted correctly and used consistently
- [x] Provide information, training and supervision so workers understand the risks and how to protect themselves and others
- [x] Provide audiometric testing to workers who regularly wear hearing protection to control the exposure to hazardous noise within three months of them commencing work in the noisy area, and at least every two years thereafter

Scan for ReturnToWorkSA's free noise assessment tool and other resources designed to help employers and health and safety representatives manage noise risks.

Noise hazards

Common noise sources and their typical sound levels in dB(A)

	**140**	Jet engine at 30m
	**130**	Rivet hammer **pain** can be felt at this threshold
	**120**	Rock drill
	**110**	Chainsaw
	**100**	Sheet-metal workshop
	**90**	Lawnmower
	**85**	Front-end loader
	**80**	Kerbside: heavy traffic, lathe
	**70**	Loud conversation
	**60**	Normal conversation
	**40**	Quiet radio music
	**30**	Whispering
		Hearing threshold

Workers

Protect your hearing every time

- [x] Use hearing protection when and where it is required
- [x] Check that earplugs or earmuffs fit properly and are in good condition
- [x] Speak up if you notice noisy equipment, missing controls or hearing protection that is not suitable for the task
- [x] Report ringing in the ears, muffled hearing or changes in hearing early
- [x] Signs that noise levels may be too high include needing to raise your voice to speak to someone one metre away, ringing in the ears, or reduced hearing after work
- [x] Remember ear pods and noise cancelling headphones are not a substitute to protect against hazardous noise levels

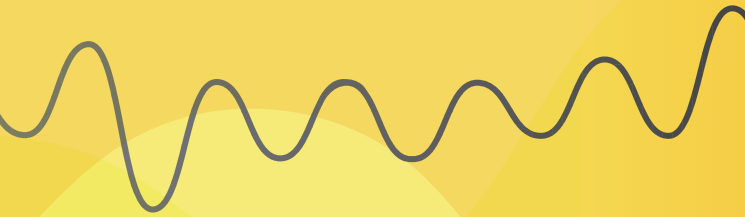
- The recommended target in-ear exposure level for workers wearing hearing protection is 80 dB(A).
- The maximum level of noise entering a worker's ears (the in-ear noise level) must not exceed:
  - 85dB(A) averaged over an 8-hour period, or
  - a peak noise level not exceeding 140dB(C)
- Hearing loss can also occur after exposure to a sudden dangerous level of sound (above 140dC).
- Overprotection should also be avoided, as it may reduce a worker's ability to hear warning signals and communicate effectively.

Remember – it's not just your hearing at stake. Always check your surroundings to ensure others are adequately protected before you begin a noisy task.

Turn down the risk

Act before hearing loss happens

Check the noise risks in your workplace, review your control measures and make sure workers understand how to protect their hearing and have the equipment they need to do so.



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For languages other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre on 1800 280 203 and ask for an interpreter to call ReturnToWorkSA on 13 18 55.

For braille, audio or e-text of the information in this publication call 13 18 55.

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