CrewSigned

Hearing Protection Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Hearing loss from noise is one of the most common work-related illnesses, and it is permanent. There is no surgery or pill that brings it back. It happens slowly, so most people do not notice until it is too late, when they cannot follow a conversation in a restaurant or they need the TV turned way up. Today we are talking about protecting what you have left.

Loud noise damages the tiny hair cells in your inner ear. Every exposure does a little damage, and it adds up over years. Ringing in your ears after a loud day, or sounds seeming muffled on the drive home, are warning signs that damage is happening.

How loud is too loud? Here is a simple test. If you have to raise your voice to talk to someone standing about an arm's length away, the noise is probably loud enough to damage your hearing over a full shift. On our jobs that includes saws, grinders, jackhammers, nail guns, compressors, generators, heavy equipment and powder-actuated tools. The louder the noise, the less time it takes to do damage.

The best fix is to reduce the noise at the source. Keep mufflers and equipment maintained, put generators and compressors farther away or behind a barrier, and choose quieter tools when we can. Limit how long people spend near the loudest work.

When the noise is still high, wear hearing protection, and wear it right. Foam earplugs only work when they are rolled tight into a thin cylinder, inserted deep into the ear while you pull the top of your ear up and back, and held for a few seconds while they expand. If half the plug is sticking out, it is not doing much. Earmuffs need a good seal, so hair, glasses and hats can let noise leak in. In very loud work, wear both plugs and muffs.

Wear protection the whole time you are exposed. Taking it out for even a few minutes in a loud area cuts the protection a lot. Keep spare plugs in your pocket.

Protect your hearing off the job too. Loud music in headphones, motorcycles, power tools at home and firearms all add to the same damage. Your ears do not know whether you are on the clock.

Discussion questions

1. Which tools or areas on this job are loud enough that you have to raise your voice to be heard?
2. Show how you put in a foam earplug so it seals properly.
3. Have you noticed ringing in your ears or muffled hearing after a shift? What did you do about it?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1910.95, Occupational noise exposure
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.95

SOURCES

Hearing Conservation (OSHA 3074): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3074.pdf
Construction: Noise in Construction Pocket Guide (OSHA 3498): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/3498NOISE-IN-CONSTRUCTION-POCKET-GUIDE.pdf
NIOSH, Noise and Occupational Hearing Loss: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/noise/
OSHA Safety and Health Topics, Occupational Noise Exposure: https://www.osha.gov/noise

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Hearing Protection Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

#	Printed name	Signature	Company / trade
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			

Skip the paper: run this talk and collect signatures on phones at crewsigned.com