Noise and Hearing Protection – Stats & Facts



FACTS

1. Too much noise can gradually damage your hearing. The damage may not be noticeable at first, but once it occurs, the hearing loss is permanent. The louder the sound the more likely damage will occur. Noise-induced hearing loss is preventable, but it is permanent and can get worse over time.
2. Research shows that stronger occupational regulation of noise leads to safer sound levels.
3. Employees exposed to hazardous levels of noise must be provided hearing protection and replacements at no cost. The employer is required to provide multiple suitable options of hearing protectors including one type of earplug and one type of earmuff.
4. Hearing protectors are required to decrease employee noise exposure to at least an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85dBA. The noise reduction ratio (NRR) is the unit of measure to determine the effectiveness of hearing protectors. The higher the NRR, the higher potential for noise reduction. It is important to know that the NRR does not represent a direct reduction in decibels. To determine the noise reduction capability of a specific hearing protector, you must take the NRR in decibels, subtract seven, and then divide by two.

STATS

- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that workers are not exposed to noise at a level that amounts to more than 85 decibels (dBA) over 8 continuous hours.
- NIOSH estimates that 30 million U.S. workers are exposed to noise levels high enough to cause irreversible hearing loss.
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 20,000 workplace hearing loss cases occur annually, many resulting in permanent hearing loss.
- An estimated 24% of hearing loss in the United States has been attributed to workplace exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control.
- In the U.S., hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition among adults after hypertension and arthritis.
- About 12 % of the U.S working population has hearing difficulty.

- About 8% of the U.S working population has Tinnitus (ringing in the ears).
- Each year, about 22 million external U.S. workers are exposed to hazardous noise levels at work. Over 30 million external U.S. workers are exposed to chemicals, some of which are harmful to the ear (ototoxic) and hazardous to hearing.
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 22 million workers are exposed to potentially damaging noise at work each year. Whether you work at a sports venue, on a tarmac, or operate a jackhammer—hearing loss is preventable.