
30.0 HEARING PROTECTION

30.1 General

Hearing protection is designed to reduce the level of sound energy reaching the inner ear.

The “rule of thumb” for hearing protection is: use hearing protection when you can’t carry on a conversation at a normal volume of voice when you are 3 feet apart.

Remember, this is only a rule of thumb. Any sound over 80 dba requires hearing protection. Hearing loss can be very gradual, usually happening over a number of years.

The common types of hearing protection in the construction industry are **earplugs** and **earmuffs**. If you choose to use the other types of hearing protection, ask your safety supplier or Occupational Health & Safety office for further information.

It is important to have different styles of hearing protection available. Different styles allow a better chance of a good fit. Each person’s head, ear shape and size are different. One style may not fit every person on your crew. If hearing PPE does not fit properly or is painful to use, the personnel will likely not use it. If the hearing protection is not properly fitted, it will not supply the level of protection it was designed to deliver.

Most earplugs, if properly fitted, generally reduce noise to the point where it is comfortable (takes the sharp edge off the noise).

If your hearing protection does not take the sharp edge off the noise, of if workers have ringing, pain, headaches or discomfort in the ears, your operation requires the advice of an expert.

Workers should have their hearing tested at least every year, twice a year if they work in a high noise area.

For further information, refer to OHS Handi-Guide /Hearing Protection