



## Did you know? ...

### Noise

#### What are the hazards and risk with noise?

Construction is a noisy business. Noise at high levels can result in damage to the inner part of your ears, which reduces your ability to hear. Noise induced hearing loss is the most common occupational health hazard there is, and is permanent.

Noise is measured in decibels (dB(A)). To give you an idea of what the dB(A) levels sound like: normal conversation is 50-60 dB(A), a loud radio is 65-70 dB(A), a busy street is 78-85 dB(A), an electric drill 95-100 dB(A), a hammer on nails 115-120 dB(A), a power drill 125-130 dB(A).

When are you most at risk of damaging your hearing?

- If you are standing about 2 metres away from someone and you have to shout to be heard then the noise level is high and you should wear hearing protection
- If you are carrying out noisy tasks such as drilling

You do not have to be using noisy equipment to be affected by it, just be nearby. One of the major problems with hearing loss is that it gradually occurs over time, so you may not be aware of it happening.

#### What should my employer be doing?

Your employer must assess and identify ways to get rid of or reduce your exposure to noise to protect you and your health, and then make sure that:



- Control measures to reduce noise are used properly, for example
  - Using quieter equipment or a quieter process
  - Fit mufflers to tools where applicable
  - Move noisy machines away from where you are working
  - Shield noise sources, by using screens or noise absorbent materials to form a barrier
- Provide you with relevant information and training on noise and its risks to your health
- If necessary, carry out health surveillance

### What health checks do I have?

When you go for a hearing test the occupational health professional will have a look in your ears to see if there are any problems, for example a build up of wax, which may affect the results of your hearing test. You will then have a hearing (audiometry) test. You will be asked to wear a set of headphones and the machine, that the headphones are connected to, will play some sounds. When you hear the sounds you show, normally by pushing a button, that you have heard something.



### What can I do to protect my hearing?

Try to reduce the noise levels in the workplace, for example you could:

- Select quieter tools
- Turn off unused machinery
- Keep compressor covers closed
- Wear hearing protection correctly
- Take note of noise hazard warning signs
- Get your hearing tested regularly



### If I notice any of these symptoms what do I need to do?

The only way to tell if you have damaged your hearing is to have a hearing test. However being able to identify any signs of hearing loss at an early stage is important. Spotting these early signs and making some adjustments can prevent the condition from getting any worse. A number of things which may act as early warning signs that you have a problem including:



## NATIONAL INDUSTRY SCHEME FOR WORKPLACE HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Helpline: **0845 873 7726**



constructing **better** health

IMPROVING WORKPLACE HEALTH

- Tinnitus which can be a ringing in your ears
- Having trouble understanding what people say, especially in crowded rooms
- Needing to turn the TV sound up - although others will usually point this out to you!!!
- Having to ask people to repeat what they just said to you and then giving up because its embarrassing to keep asking
- Not being able to hear high-pitched sounds, like a baby crying or a telephone ringing in another room
- It may be that some letters disappear, p's and b's tend to go first
- You may find that someone calls your name and you look one way but find that they are standing the other side of you, as it becomes difficult to work out which direction noises are coming from
- You may also find that you can't hear what someone is saying unless they are looking directly at you. We all lip read but generally we use the noises that we hear to back things up



Sometimes your hearing reacts to loud noise and results in temporary loss, one way to tell if that where you are working is too loud, is if you have to turn the radio up when you get in the car to go home and down again the next morning when it then seems loud.



Gradually hearing loss will get worse and you may be unable to make out what people are saying at all. **Once you are deaf ... you stay deaf**

If your employer provides you with **hearing protection then you should use it.**

If you recognise any of these situations then you need to speak to someone. Speak to your manager or the occupational health nurse or doctor, for general advice you can contact CBH on 0845 873 7726.

## Useful Links

HSE website – <http://www.hse.gov.uk/noise/>

CBH – [www.cbhscheme.com](http://www.cbhscheme.com)

