



Express Eddie's Toolbox



In Some Workplaces, Noise Is An Invisible Hazard

Many workplaces require hard hats to protect against falling objects and [work gloves](#) to protect employees' hands from machinery and debris. They also require protection against something else that can be just as dangerous – loud noise. Although hearing loss can occur suddenly, it usually happens gradually, over time, so it's a good idea to take precautions against hearing loss whenever your job exposes you to loud sounds.

OSHA considers 85 decibels to be the loudest sustained noise that people can be exposed to without harming their ability to hear. Anything louder than that is a health risk and means that extra steps are necessary. One way to protect workers' hearing is to provide them with [disposable or reusable ear plugs](#), hearing band protectors, or ear muffs.



Equipment and areas can be modified with engineering controls that include choosing lower noise tools and machinery, and enclosing or isolating the noise source. Barriers, such as sound walls or curtains, can be placed between workers and loud machinery and equipment.

Besides [ear plugs](#), an effective remedy for noise exposure is to implement administrative changes in the workplace that can reduce that exposure. Those changes can include having workers stand farther away from loud equipment, limiting the time workers spend near a noise source, or operating loud equipment during shifts when fewer people are exposed.

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