

Hearing Protection

Noise Hazards

- Noise can damage hearing when it is continuously at about 90 dBA or greater.
- Noisy work area can elevate anxiety, hypertension, and fatigue in employees.
- Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and occurs progressively over time.
- The following table lists recommended exposure times without hearing protection for noise hazards and levels routinely encountered in agricultural settings:



<u>Noise Hazard Examples</u>	<u>Level of Noise</u>	<u>Recommended Exposure Time</u>
Dynamite blast, gunshot	140 dBA	None
Chainsaw	115 dBA	15 minutes or less
Barn fan, combine	110 dBA	30 minutes
Table Saw, grinder, tractor	100 dBA	2 hours
Shop vacuum	98 dBA	3 hours
Lawn mower	90 dBA	8 hours
Idling tractor	85 dBA	Damage can occur if exposure >8 hours

These may vary in sound level

Preventing Hearing Damage

- Use hearing protection (i.e. acoustic ear muffs or ear plugs) when working in an environment where noise levels are continuously at about 90 dBA or higher.
- Warning signs for overexposure to noise include ringing in the ears (called tinnitus) and temporary loss of hearing sensitivity (called temporary threshold shift).
- Select and use hearing protection with an appropriate noise reduction rating (NRR) to reduce ambient noise to below 90 dBA.
- Be aware that the manufacturer's NRR was derived under ideal conditions and therefore, a more realistic rating for use in the field is about one-half the manufacturer's NRR.
- Hearing protection worn incorrectly may not adequately reduce noise exposure.
- Cotton balls do not effectively provide hearing protection.

- Noise levels can be reduced by adding distance from sources. For every 6 feet of added distance, noise can be reduced by 3-5 decibels.