

# Protect Your Hearing On the Job

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

## KEY POINTS:

- Prolonged exposure to loud noise can lead to permanent hearing loss.
- Earplugs and  earmuffs will help protect your hearing.

*Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.*

*Bring samples of earplugs or  earmuffs used in your operation to the training session.*

## How noise can hurt you

- We all work in noisy conditions at times.
- But too much exposure to loud noise can hurt you. It can:
  - cause you to miss important safety instructions;
  - result in stress, from constantly straining to listen and be heard;
  - lead to hearing loss.
- Prolonged exposure to loud noise can result in permanent hearing loss.
- Even if you are exposed to loud noise for a short time, you may temporarily lose your hearing.

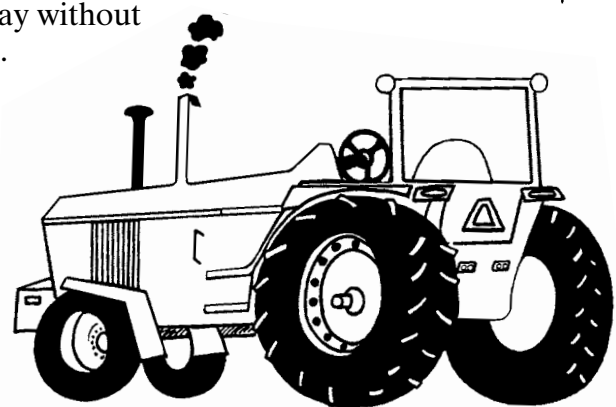
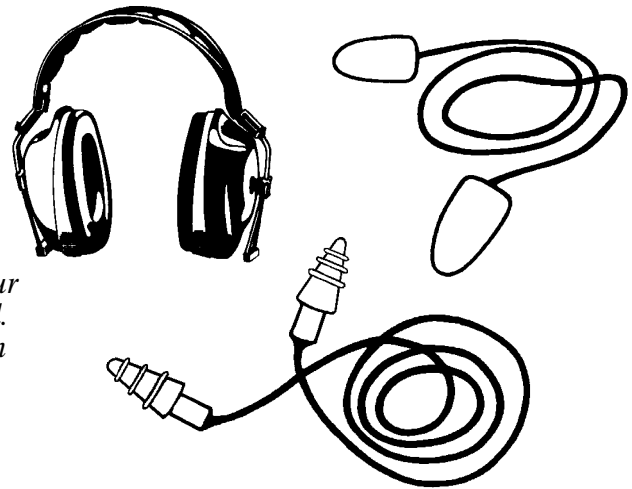
## Some examples of loud noise

- Noise is measured in a term called “decibels.”
- Noise that is more than 85 decibels can affect your hearing if you work around it more than eight hours a day.
- Some examples of 85 decibels of noise are an idling tractor or combine, a grain dryer, a barn cleaner and a conveyor.
- Using an old chain saw, power tools, or working on a tractor without an enclosed cab exposes you to even more dangerous noise levels.
- If you use power tools for more than one hour a day without hearing protection, you may damage your hearing.

*Note to trainer: Give trainees some examples of loud noise in their work areas.*

## How to tell if noise is hurting you

- You may have a problem if you:
  - hear ringing or other noises in your ears;
  - can't hear people when they talk to you;
  - can't hear high pitched or soft sounds.
- If you experience any of these problems, tell your supervisor. You may need to have your hearing tested.



**Idling tractor: 85 decibels**

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See our [full line of safety supplies](http://www.gemplers.com), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

## Protect Your Hearing On the Job

### You can protect your hearing

- One good way to protect your hearing is to wear earplugs when you are exposed to loud noise. These reduce noise when they are inserted into your ears.
- Some earplugs are disposable and some may be reused.

**Warning:** Do not stuff cotton in your ears in place of earplugs. It won't block the noise and you may damage your ears.

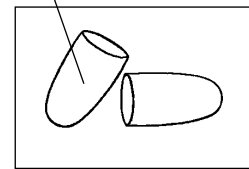
- Wearing  earmuffs  is another good way to protect your hearing. These cover your entire ear, just like some stereo headsets.
- Earplugs  and  earmuffs  come with a “noise reduction rating” or NRR. Be sure yours have an NRR of at least 25.

**Note to trainer:** Show trainees examples of earplugs or  earmuffs  used in your operation.



### Wearing earplugs and earmuffs

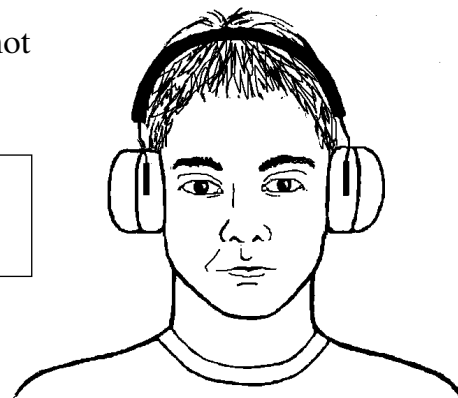
- Wash your hands before you insert earplugs or put on  earmuffs .
- Check for cracks or other damage. Report any problems to your supervisor, and get different  hearing protection .
- Check the manufacturer's instructions on how to insert earplugs or put on  earmuffs .
- Foam earplugs are usually inserted by rolling each plug into a thin cylinder, then compressing it before inserting it. Hold it there until it expands.
- Be sure your earplugs or  earmuffs  feel comfortable, and are not too loose or too tight.
- And the cups on  earmuffs  shouldn't pinch your ears.



**Reminder:** Keep your earplugs and  earmuffs  clean. Wash reusable earplugs in warm, soapy water each time you finish wearing them. Clean  earmuffs  according to the manufacturer's instructions.

### Are there any questions?

**Note to trainer:** Take time to answer trainees' questions, then review the Hearing Protection Do's and Don'ts.



## HEARING PROTECTION DO'S AND DON'TS

### DO:

- Use earplugs or  earmuffs  in noisy environments.
- Make sure your earplugs or  earmuffs  fit comfortably.
- Clean reusable earplugs after each use.

### DON'T:

- Stand too close to noisy machinery for a long time.
- Reuse disposable earplugs.
- Share earplugs with your co-workers.

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