Protect Your **Hearing On the Job**

**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 However, it may not be published or sold.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.

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO:</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use earplugs or earmuffs in noisy environments.</td>
<td>Stand too close to noisy machinery for a long time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make sure your earplugs or earmuffs fit comfortably.</td>
<td>Reuse disposable earplugs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean reusable earplugs after each use.</td>
<td>Share earplugs with your co-workers.</td>
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