

Hearing Protection

About 10 minutes to deliver

Hearing loss is painless, gradual and permanent — and the plugs only work if they are in properly.

Noise-induced hearing loss does not hurt, does not happen on any particular day, and does not come back. People notice it years later, when they stop being able to follow a conversation in a pub.

THE NUMBERS

1910.95 sets the action level at 85 decibels averaged over eight hours — the point at which a hearing conservation program is required, with monitoring, testing and protection provided.

The scale is logarithmic, which catches people out. Every 3 dB is roughly a doubling of sound energy, so safe exposure time halves as noise rises:

- 85 dB — eight hours
- 91 dB — about two hours
- 100 dB — about fifteen minutes
- 115 dB — under a minute

A rough field test: if you have to raise your voice to be understood at arm's length, you are somewhere around 85 dB and above.

PLUGS ONLY WORK IF THEY ARE IN

Most people get a fraction of the rated protection because they are inserted wrong. Foam plugs:

- Roll it down thin between your fingers.
- Reach over your head and pull your ear up and back to straighten the canal.
- Insert and hold for 20–30 seconds while it expands.

Done right, cupping your hands over your ears makes very little difference to what you hear. If it gets noticeably quieter, they are not seated.

- Muffs need a clean seal — no hair, no glasses arms, no hard hat strap breaking the cushion.
- Both together for very high noise, but doubling up does not double the rating.
- Plugs go in clean hands. Dirty foam in an ear canal causes infections.

SIGNS YOU ARE LOSING IT

Ringings after a shift. Turning the radio up. Missing consonants when someone speaks normally. Any of those and say something — an audiogram catches it early, while there is still something to protect.

ASK THE CREW

- Where on this site do you have to shout to be heard?
- Does everyone here know how to roll and seat a foam plug?
- Has anyone noticed ringing in their ears at the end of a shift?

29 CFR 1910.95 · 29 CFR 1926.52 · 29 CFR 1926.101

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafetysolutions.com

v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafetysolutions.com/toolbox-talks/hearing-protection>

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Hearing Protection

About 10 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1910.95 · 29 CFR 1926.52 · 29 CFR 1926.101

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

Form supplied by Migna Safety Solutions · v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/hearing-protection>

Keep this sheet with your training records. This form is supplied blank by Migna Safety Solutions — we did not deliver this session, were not present, and make no representation about what was said or who attended. A toolbox talk is general awareness on one topic and does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. The employer remains responsible for site-specific hazard assessment and for the training its workers are required to have. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, and confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. training.mignasafety.com