

## Protecting Your Hearing

Loud or prolonged exposure to noise can cause hearing loss. The damage may occur gradually, but it's permanent and very real. You may not know that excessive noise is endangering your hearing until it's too late; while it's happening, it's painless and hard to detect. But you can prevent it.

### TRUE STORY

A tractor operator was operating an open-cab tractor 10-12 hours a day preparing a field—without wearing hearing protection. Within a week, he woke up one morning and could barely hear. His doctor diagnosed temporary hearing loss and warned that repeated exposure could cause permanent hearing loss. Fortunately, his hearing returned within a few days and he started wearing hearing protection at all times when driving a tractor.

### What could have prevented this accident?

- Conduct sound-level testing of noisy equipment to determine if the noise level warrants hearing protection and worker training.
- Apply this test: If it's hard to talk with someone with noisy equipment nearby, make sure workers wear hearing protection.

### Take the 90-Decibel Test

Prevent hearing loss by wearing hearing protection when noise levels are at or above 90 decibels (dB) for an 8-hour period. How noisy is 90 dB? As a rule, the noise is excessive if you must raise your voice to be heard and understood when standing at arm's length from the other person.

### EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Employer:

- Identify high-risk noise areas where hearing protection should be worn.
- Conduct sound-level testing of noisy job positions.
- Train employees in the proper fit, use, and care of hearing protection devices, such as earplugs and earmuffs.

#### Employee:

- Notify a supervisor of excessively noisy areas or equipment.
- Wear hearing protection provided by your employer.

- Participate in training in the proper use of hearing protection devices.
- Reduce excessive noise at home that may impact your hearing. Wear hearing protection to protect yourself, if necessary.

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**<sup>®</sup>

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