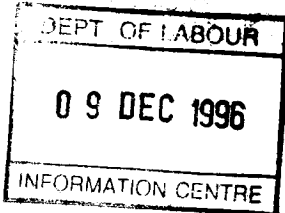




FORESTRY BULLETIN



Hearing Loss and You: Part 2

(Continued from Forestry Bulletin No. 109)

Prevention of hearing loss

Under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and the Health and Safety in Employment Regulations 1995, employers shall take all practicable steps to protect the employees by:

1. Controlling the noise at source; or
2. Isolating or insulating the processes that cause excessive noise.

Hearing loss caused by exposure to loud and excessive noise is preventable and a planned approach is required to achieve this.

Lets consider ways of helping to prevent hearing loss by looking at:

1. Machinery and plant — reducing noise at source and insulating the process.
2. Personal protective equipment.
3. Noise levels and grades of protection required.

1. Machinery and plant

Ways of reducing noise levels include:

- When purchasing machinery, noise levels should be amongst the purchase criteria.
- Ensure that stationary plant is properly installed and that all plant and machinery is maintained and operated to ensure minimum noise levels.

- Fit any noise dampers that are available.
- Maintain mufflers and silencers to ensure maximum efficiency.
- Avoid over-revving of machines when this is not necessary for proper operation. Don't play the "cowboys".
- If possible, increase the distance between the person and the noise source.
- Where practicable, place noise barriers between the person and the noise source.
- If operations permit, reschedule work for shorter exposure periods to high noise levels.

2. Personal protective equipment

When it's not possible to isolate or insulate the employee from harmful noise, personal protection is necessary. In any area subject to harmful noise, the correct grade of hearing protection should be worn. OSH inspectors (forestry) or occupational health nurses or other providers may be able to help to sort out the appropriate protection required in different work areas.

- People using personal protective equipment must be trained in its correct use and adequate supplies must be available to ensure cleanliness and proper maintenance.

- Earplugs must be firmly in and make an effective seal. Training on correct fitting is essential.
- Earmuff pads must seal around the ear and the tension band must clamp the muffs onto the head at the designed pressure to ensure an effective seal.
- Equipment should be stored in a proper container when not in use.
- If the equipment is not in first class order and the seals obtained not adequate, the effectiveness of the protective equipment is threatened.

3. Noise levels and grades of protection required

Where noise levels are still harmful, we need to know what level of protection you will require to prevent hearing loss in a working day.

Noise levels are expressed in decibels.

Below we look at a range of noises which you will recognise. We have the average decibel readings and, most important to you, the grade of hearing protection you will need to prevent hearing loss.

Source	Decibels	Decibel exposure for 8-hour day	Hearing protection required
Jackhammer	120	Over 115	Seek expert advice
Sandblasting	112	110 - 115	Grade 5 earmuffs
Chainsaws	106 - 109		
Brushcutter	104 - 106		
Disco	100 - 110	104 - 109	Grade 4 earmuffs
Petrol driven tools	100		
Pneumatic drill	100		
Boiler shop	100	98 - 103	Grade 3 earmuffs
Older machinery	90 - 95	92 - 97	Grade 2 earmuffs or earplugs
Modern machinery	85 - 90		
Average factory	80 - 90	86 - 91	Grade 1 earmuffs or earplugs
Busy traffic	75		
Ordinary speech	66		
Average home	50		
Quiet office	40		
Soft whisper	30	85 and below	No protection needed

Having permanent hearing loss is preventable.

Wear your protection where required.

Have regular hearing testing.