TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-NOI · Noise and Hearing Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: Workers in noisy workplaces · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 8 November 2026

For workers around noisy plant, tools or processes: how noise damages hearing for good, how to tell when it is too loud, and the controls that protect it.

Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and builds up gradually, so it often goes unnoticed until it is too late. Very loud short noises can also cause immediate damage, and noise can contribute to tinnitus, fatigue and incidents when warnings are not heard.

This talk covers the workplace exposure standard for noise, simple ways to tell when noise is likely to be too loud, the hierarchy of control for noise, wearing hearing protection properly the whole time, and audiometric testing.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain how noise causes permanent hearing loss and tinnitus
- Describe the exposure standard for noise: an eight-hour average of 85 dB(A), and a peak of 140 dB(C)
- Recognise when noise is likely to be too loud, such as having to raise your voice to talk to someone a metre away
- Describe controls that reduce noise at the source: quieter equipment, maintenance, enclosures and distance
- Choose, fit and wear hearing protection correctly for the whole time in noisy areas
- Explain audiometric testing and why workers who need hearing protection have it

What it covers

Module	Covers
How noise harms	Hearing loss and tinnitus; Gradual and sudden damage; Noise and other risks
How loud is too loud	The exposure standard; The one-metre test; Signs and mandatory hearing protection areas
Controls	Quieter equipment and maintenance; Isolation, enclosures and distance; Hearing protection: choosing, fitting, wearing; Audiometric testing

Activities

- Fit it right: a demonstration of fitting foam earplugs and checking earmuff seals
- Noise map: workers mark the noisy areas and tasks in their workplace and the controls in each

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What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

Questions

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Noise and Hearing Awareness

How noise damages hearing for good, how to tell when it is too loud, and the controls that protect it

20–30 minutes · Workers in noisy workplaces

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

NOI

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ How noise damages hearing
- ✓ How to tell when it is too loud
- ✓ Controls, and hearing protection
- ✓ Hearing tests, and your part

This talk is not

- ✗ A noise assessment or noise measurement
- ✗ A hearing test
- ✗ Training on specialist hearing protectors
- ✗ Our assessment: **[Our noise assessment]**

Awareness only. Noise assessments and hearing tests are done by competent people with the right equipment.

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How noise harms

Loud noise damages the tiny hair cells in the inner ear. They do not grow back.

- Gradual damage: years of exposure, painless, often unnoticed until conversation gets hard
- Sudden damage: a very loud bang, such as a nail gun, explosion or hammer on steel, can harm hearing at once
- Tinnitus: ringing or buzzing in the ears that may never go away
- Other risks: missing warnings and reversing alarms, fatigue, and stress
- Some chemicals, such as certain solvents, add to the damage

A composite example

- A worker has run a concrete saw and a compactor for years with earmuffs 'on most of the time'. At a family dinner they realise they cannot follow the conversation.
- The damage built up a little each day. It is permanent.

Hearing lost to noise does not come back.

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How loud is too loud

AVERAGE OVER 8 HOURS

85 dB(A)

The exposure standard: no worker may be exposed above an eight-hour average of 85 decibels, A-weighted.

PEAK

140 dB(C)

No single bang or impact may exceed a peak of 140 decibels, C-weighted.

HALF THE TIME

Plus 3 dB

Every 3 dB increase doubles the noise energy. At 88 dB(A), the limit is reached in four hours.

A QUICK CHECK

The one-metre test

If you have to raise your voice to be understood by someone about a metre away, it is probably too loud.

If you have to shout at a metre, assume it is too loud.

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Duties under WHS or OHS laws

The business must

- Keep noise exposure below the exposure standard, using the order of controls
- Assess noise where it may exceed the standard, and act on it
- Provide hearing protection, signs and training where noise cannot be reduced enough
- Provide audiometric testing for workers who need hearing protection

You must

- Use quieter methods, enclosures and other controls provided
- Wear hearing protection properly, the whole time, in noisy areas
- Look after it, and report damaged or uncomfortable protectors
- Take part in audiometric testing, and report noise problems

Victoria's OHS Regulations set the same exposure standard and similar duties in their own terms. Check yours.

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TOOLBOX TALK · HAZ-NOI

Noise and Hearing Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and builds up without pain. Very loud bangs can damage hearing at once. Keep this page.

How loud is too loud

- Exposure standard: 85 dB(A) averaged over eight hours, and a peak of 140 dB(C)
- Every 3 dB more halves the safe time: 88 dB(A) for four hours
- Raise your voice to be understood at a metre? It is probably too loud
- Ringing or dull ears after work: a warning sign

The order of controls for noise

1. Remove the noisy process
2. Quieter equipment or method
3. Enclosures, separate rooms, distance
4. Silencers, damping, barriers, maintenance
5. Limit time in noise, signs, quiet areas
6. Hearing protection, worn the whole time

Hearing tests

- For workers who need hearing protection: within three months of starting, then at least every two years
- Ask about your results

Fit it right

- ☐ Foam earplugs: clean hands, then roll the plug into a thin, tight cylinder
- ☐ Reach over your head, pull the top of the ear up and back to open the canal
- ☐ Push the plug well in, and hold it for 20 to 30 seconds while it expands
- ☐ Check: your own voice sounds louder and muffled; little of the plug shows
- ☐ Earmuffs: cushions whole, soft and clean; headband still springy
- ☐ Cups fully over both ears; hair pushed back; band adjusted to fit
- ☐ Nothing under the seal: glasses arms, beanies, hoods or pencils
- ☐ Keep them on the whole time you are in the noise

Where

- Hearing protection: **[Where hearing protection is kept here]**
- Areas: **[Our hearing protection areas]**

Report when

- A machine gets louder, rattles or leaks
- An enclosure or silencer is damaged
- Your protectors are damaged or uncomfortable
- Report to: **[Who to report to here]**

Quiet the noise first. Wear your protection the whole time. Hearing lost to noise does not come back.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It is not a noise assessment or a hearing test.

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