

# Protect Your Hearing On the Job

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are available in Spanish at [gemplers.com](http://gemplers.com).

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 However, it may not be published or sold.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

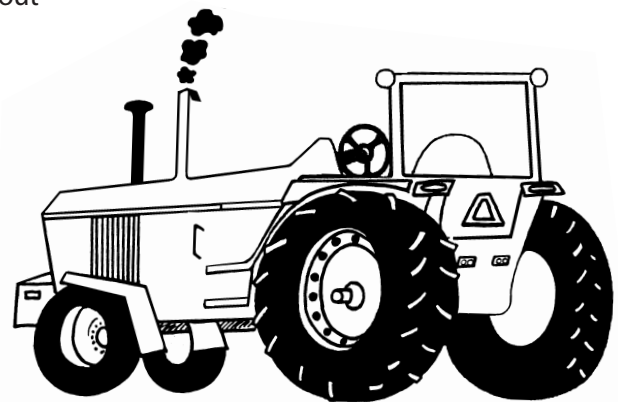
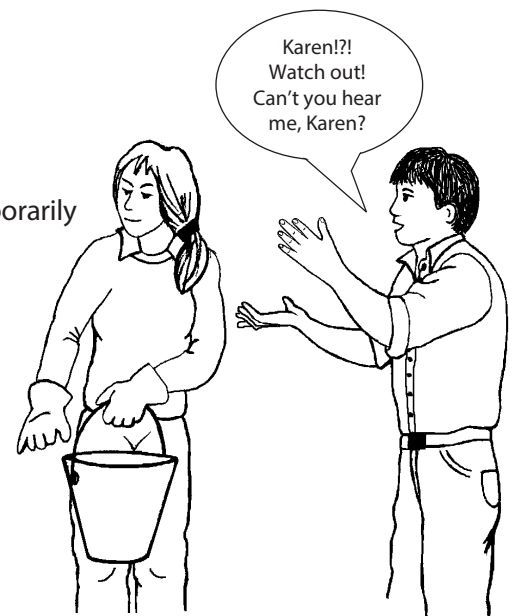
## Some examples of loud noise

- 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.



**Idling tractor: 85 decibels**

(Continued on back)

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# Protect Your Hearing On the Job

## 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.

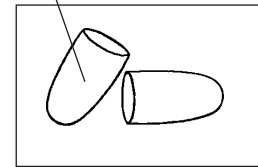
- Wearing earmuffs is another good way to protect your hearing. These cover your entire ear, just like some stereo headsets.
- Earplugs and earmuffs come with a “noise reduction rating” or NRR. Be sure yours have an NRR of at least 25.

Note to trainer: Show trainees examples of earplugs or earmuffs used in your operation.

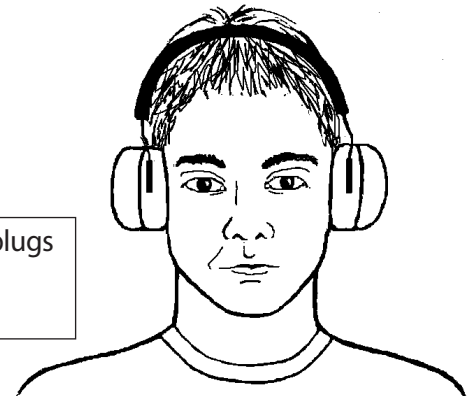


## Wearing earplugs and earmuffs

- 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**.

<b>HEARING PROTECTION DO'S AND DON'TS</b>	
<p><b>DO:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use earplugs or earmuffs in noisy environments.</li> <li>• Make sure your earplugs or earmuffs fit comfortably.</li> <li>• Clean reusable earplugs after each use.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DON'T:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand too close to noisy machinery for a long time.</li> <li>• Reuse disposable earplugs.</li> <li>• Share earplugs with your co-workers.</li> </ul>

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