



# SAFETY BRIEF

## FAQs ON HEARING LOSS

Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common occupational hazard for U.S. workers. 30 million workers are exposed to hazardous noise on the job, and 1 in 4 of these workers will develop permanent hearing loss.

Exposure to loud sounds can damage the hair-like auditory nerves in your inner ear. Those nerves carry the sound signals to your brain. Once the damage is done, there's no reversing it—it's permanent. The more exposure you have to loud noises, the more damage you are going to experience.

### **CAN I JUST USE COTTON BALLS TO PROTECT MY EARS?**

No. Cotton does not protect your ear like actual hearing protection does. You may still experience hearing loss if you use cotton balls instead of the appropriate level of protection.

### **WHO PAYS FOR MY HEARING PROTECTION AT WORK?**

OSHA requires that the employer pays for all necessary hearing protectors including replacements. The employer decides what types of hearing protectors to offer, but has to make sure that they are adequate for the noise environment. The employer is required to offer a reasonable choice in order to maximize compliance.

### **WON'T HEARING PROTECTORS INTERFERE WITH MY ABILITY TO HEAR IMPORTANT SOUNDS?**

If you wear hearing protection correctly, you should be able to hear everything you need to hear. The sound may not be as loud so it might take some time to get adjusted.

### **DO I REALLY NEED HEARING PROTECTION? I AM USED TO THE NOISE.**

There is no way for your ears to get used to the noise. Repeated exposure to hazardous noise levels does not make for tougher ears, just damaged ones.



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