

HEARING SAFETY: HOW LOUD IS TOO LOUD?



AgHealth
Central States
Center for Agricultural
Safety and Health



University of Nebraska
Medical Center™

PROTECT YOUR HEARING ON & OFF THE FARM

Did you know? Noise injury affects 2/3 of the farming population. There are thousands of tiny hair cells in our ears that send hearing signals to the brain. These hair cells can be damaged by long-term exposure to loud noises.

The best way to prevent hearing loss is to reduce farm noise and exposure!



QUICK FACTS

- Noises over 85 decibels are too loud
- Hearing damage is irreversible
- Earplugs and earmuffs are both suitable forms of hearing protection

What noise levels require hearing protection devices?

- If you have to speak loudly to someone three feet away, you are working around noises that require hearing protection.
- The danger zone for hearing damage starts at about 85 decibels (dB).
- With each 3 decibel increase, the "safe time" is cut in half.

When should you be concerned about your hearing? If you...

- Need to turn up the volume on the TV or radio.
- Have difficulty understanding consonants in words and high notes of music.
- Have difficulty hearing a person's voice when they are standing only a few feet away.
- Hear muffled sound after noise has stopped.
- Have ringing in the ears.

Noise induced hearing loss is preventable, possibly cumulative, and irreversible.

GET IN TOUCH

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| DECIBEL LEVEL | TYPICAL FARM SOUNDS |
|------------------------|---|
| 60 | Normal conversation |
| THE DANGER ZONE | |
| 80 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tractor idling, barn cleaner, conveyers, elevators. • These noises can damage hearing if exposure is for more than 8 hours continuously. |
| 90 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tractor at 50% load, lawn mower, compressor, combine. • As loudness increases, the "safe" exposure time decreases; damage can occur in less than 8 hour. |
| 100 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tractor at 80% load, pig squeal, power tools, chain saw. • Even 2 hours of exposure can be dangerous. |
| 120 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tractor at full load, bad muffler, old chain saw. • The danger is immediate. |
| 140 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gunshot, back-fire, dynamite blast. • Any length of exposure time is dangerous. At this level, the noise may actually cause pain in the ear. |

FOLLOW THESE EASY RULES

E Wear **earplugs** or **earmuffs**

A **Avoid** loud noises

R **Reduce** the volume

S **Shorten** the time in noise

RESOURCES



CDC:
How to wear soft
foam earplugs
(Video)



NIOSH:
Sound level
meter app



NIH:
Keeping
noise down
on the farm