

CHOOSING AND USING HEARING PROTECTION

Muffs, Plugs, And Canal Caps

Silence may be golden—but not when it's permanent. Hearing loss is a condition that occurs over time from repeated exposure to excessive noise. We can't always prevent noise, but we can prevent hearing loss by following established safety procedures and using the appropriate hearing protectors for the noise hazards we face each day. The following is a guide to the most common types of hearing protectors and the types of hazards they can guard against.

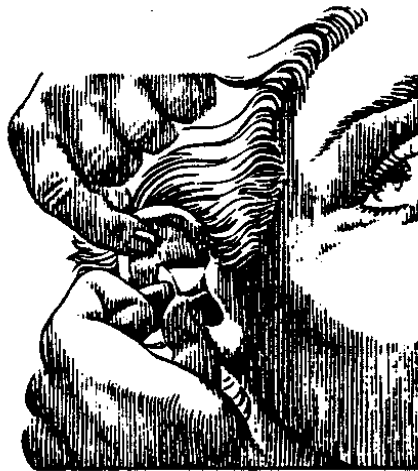


Muffs cover the entire ear and can reduce noise by as much as 15-30 decibels.

Ear Muffs

Ear muffs come in many styles. Most are attached to spring-loaded headbands, while others are attached directly to safety headgear. Specialized muffs are also available for persons who work in high-voltage exposures, or who need to filter out hazardous noises while retaining a mute hearing for normal sound ranges. Muffs cover the

entire ear and can reduce noise by as much as 15-30 decibels. (Muffs are often used in conjunction with ear plugs when a worker is exposed to extremely high noise levels—105 decibels and above.)



Ear plugs are positioned in the outer part of the ear and may reduce noise by as much as 30 decibels.

Ear Plugs

Like muffs, ear plugs come in many varieties—formable, custom-molded, pre-molded, disposable, reusable—and may be made of many different types of materials such as acoustical fiber, silicone, rubber, or plastic. Ear plugs are positioned in the outer part of the ear and may reduce noise by as much as 30 decibels. (Excessive noise is commonly defined as 85-90 decibels or more over an 8-hour period.)

Canal Caps

As their name suggests, these hearing protectors cap off or close the ear canal at its opening. Like



Canal caps are most commonly used when an individual is unable to use traditional ear plugs.

many muffs, canal caps are connected to a flexible headband that ensures a close fit. Canal caps are most commonly used when an individual is unable to use traditional ear plugs.

Using Hearing Protectors

Your supervisor can help determine the amount of noise you are exposed to on-the-job through various testing devices and will provide you with the appropriate type of hearing protection for the particular noise hazards you face. But remember, hearing protectors only work when you use them correctly and consistently. Depending on the type of hearing protectors you use, dispose of or replace them as necessary. For reusable protectors, follow the manufacturer's guidelines for cleaning and storage. When it comes to your hearing, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.