

## Noise & Hearing Loss

Our modern environment contains many noises / sounds that our ears are not designed to withstand or shut out. Some hearing loss is preventable. This is labelled Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL), it is accumulative and once acquired, cannot be cured. Hearing loss is often not apparent, but the effects can be devastating.

Short term exposure to sustained noise levels above 85dB(A) may cause temporary hearing loss, but continued exposure (varying with intensity and type of noise, distance from source and amount of time involved) can cause permanent hearing loss and stress related problems.

***The loss of hearing isolates you from the world and people around you...***

### What is Noise?

Noise can be found in any area where people live, work or play. The short definition of noise is 'Unwanted Sound', but is subjective... what irritates one person and literally "hurts" their ears, is not necessarily an annoyance or irritating to another. However, the primary concern of the hearing conservationist is the **amount AND level of noise** to which the worker is exposed to during the whole day. It is most important to remember that people can be exposed to high noise levels outside the workplace as well as at work.

This exposure may include a full weekend of trail biking or motor sports, using a chain saw to cut firewood, firing rounds at a rifle club or even attending a rock concert. What determines hearing loss can be different for individuals. The critical noise exposure level is generally considered to be 85dB(A). Noises above that level can be damaging... depending on length of exposure time.

### Did you realize that damage to your hearing is cumulative?

This means that the damage done by the noise of firearms used a while ago (possibly even as a child out shooting with your father), and the rock concert you attended 5 years ago, could have accumulated to affect your hearing today. One's total dose of noise in a 24 hr period is what can determine the amount of hearing loss. For example, an 8-12 hr work shift in noisy conditions, added to an evening or weekend of a noisy hobby or home activity with a chainsaw cutting firewood could be enough to create a hearing loss. Below are some common noise levels for comparison.

### DAMAGE Depends on...

Noise Level (how loud) **AND** Length of Exposure Time

dB(A)	Time Length before damage occurs
115	30 Seconds
112	1 min
109	2 mins
106	4 mins
103	8 mins
100	15 mins
97	30 mins
94	1 hr
91	2 hrs
88	4 hrs
85	8 hrs
84	10 hrs
83.5	12 hrs
82	16 hrs

The loss of your hearing can be insidious... In other words, hearing loss can sneak up on you and is usually not noticeable until there is a significant loss (i.e. you realize you cannot hear in a crowded place, etc).