



HEARING PROTECTION AT HOME



While Environmental Health & Safety works to ensure that employees minimize their exposure to noise while at work, employees should work to reduce their exposure to noise at home as well. Noise is measured in units called decibels (dB), on a scale from zero to 200. The higher the number in dB, the louder the noise; the greater the risk of hearing loss. Hearing loss can occur with regular exposure to noise levels of 110 dB or more for periods longer than one minute. No more than 15 minutes of unprotected exposure to 100 dB is recommended. Noise levels of 130 dB or over will be painful and is very likely to cause immediate hearing damage. Death to hearing tissue occurs at 180 dB. Here is a list of common noises and their decibel levels:

Environmental Noise	
Weakest Audible Sound	0 dB
A Whisper	30 dB
Normal Conversation	60 dB
Vacuum Cleaner	80 dB
City Traffic	85 dB
Lawn Mower	90 dB
Motorcycle	100 dB
Power Saw	110 dB
Chain Saw	110 dB
Rock Concert	115 dB
Gun Blast	140 dB
Aircraft At Take-off	180 dB

Protecting Your Hearing

There are several ways to protect your hearing while you are at home:

- Lower the volume (dB) of noise sources you have control over (i.e. iPods, stereos, and cell phones).
- Wear hearing protection, including ear plugs or ear muffs. All ear plugs and ear muffs have a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) printed on their packaging, which is the measure, in dB, of how well a hearing protector reduces noise, as specified by the Environmental Protection Agency. The higher the NRR number, the greater the noise reduction and hearing protection provided.
- Reduce the time you are exposed to noise.

So, when you're at home and exposed to noise, protect your hearing by remembering the following three tips:

1. Control the volume of the noise source (if possible)
2. Reduce the amount of time you are exposed to the noise
3. Wear hearing protection with a high NRR number