**Hearing Safety**

**Hazard**: Noise is unwanted sound. Loud and/or prolonged exposure can cause hearing loss.

Noise can have different effects on you:

* it can startle you, annoy you, and disrupt your concentration.
* it can interfere with your communications when you are talking to someone.

**PPE**

Hearing protection

* may be either ear plugs or ear muffs
* reduces noise levels in the inner ear
* particularly important when noise exposures cannot be controlled adequately by environmental changes

**Hearing loss is gradual**, even in intense exposures. By the time you realize that you can't hear as well as you used to, the damage has been done and can't be reversed.

**Good protection**

* depends on a good seal between the surface of the skin and the surface of the hearing protection
* A very small leak can destroy the effectiveness of the protection. Protectors have a tendency to work loose as a result of talking, chewing, etc., and they must be reseated from time to time during the workday.
* Most ear protectors, when correctly fitted, provide about the same amount of protection.
* The best ear protector is the one that you can wear properly.
* The use of ear protection will not make it more difficult to understand speech or to hear warning signals when worn in a noisy environment.

**Three factors may be used to determine the level of noise:**

* If it is necessary for you to speak in a very loud voice or shout directly into the ear of a person in order to be understood, it is likely that the exposure limit for noise is being exceeded.
* If you have heard noises and ringing noises in your ears at the end of the work day, you are being exposed to too much noise.
* If speech or music sounds muffled to you after leaving work, but sounds fairly clear in the morning when you return to work, there is no doubt about your being exposed to noise levels that can eventually cause a partial loss of hearing that can be permanent.