

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Noise in Agriculture



In many cases, and I might stretch that to most cases, we often take too much in our work environment for granted. Protecting our hearing ability is one of these items that we tend to take for granted. In agriculture, there are many sources of noise abuse that we never put much emphasis on, such as noise created by tractors, chainsaws, livestock, grain dryers and guns. Indirectly, we sometimes forget that noise distractions can interfere with our work and cause us to make mistakes.

It's entirely possible to leave a workplace with temporary loss of hearing and after several hours it might come back. If this happens, it is a sign that continued exposure to these loss levels will cause you to become partially or permanently hearing impaired. Hearing damage is irreversible. Permanent damage can be caused immediately by sudden, extremely loud noises, explosive noises, and also from gun sounds.

As we know, noise is measured in decibels (dB). Noise levels are measured with standards in two areas: The average over the course of a working day and peak noise exposure (sudden noises). Following are standards used to measure these levels:

- Lower Exposure Action Value = 80 dB – daily exposure and 135 dB for peak noise.
- Upper Exposure Action Value = 85 dB – daily exposure and 137 dB for peak noise.
- Limits (must not exceed) = 85dB – daily exposure and 140 dB – peak noise.

EXAMPLES OF HOW NOISY SOME AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES ARE:

- ~Shotgun (peak noise) – 150dB
- ~Hand grinding metal – 108 dB
- ~Unsilenced air discharge – 105 dB
- ~Chainsaw/pig house @feeding time – 100 dB
- ~Circular saw – 100 dB
- ~Gas-driven grass mower – 96 dB
- ~Tractor cab (maximum) – 90 dB
- ~Electric drill – 87 dB
- ~Modern tractor Q cab – 80 dB

As one can tell, it behooves all of us that are involved in any of these activities to:

- ~Use noise-control measures properly and follow any working methods that are put in place.
- ~Wear hearing protection when you are doing noisy work, where hearing protection is needed.
- ~Take care of hearing protection equipment and report any problems involving the equipment or its absence.

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As mentioned earlier, most people can't detect hearing loss as it occurs slowly over an extended time period. A person with hearing loss may think another person is "mumbling" and needs to speak louder. If there is any doubt, one should go to an audiologist, who is sometimes located in clinics or hospitals. In larger areas, auditory clinics can possibly be located there.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CONSIDER PROTECTION?

- If you are continually working in conditions where the noise level exceeds 85 dbs.
- After being in noisy areas, you experience "ringing" in your ears.
- After being in a noisy area, you are bothered and nervous.
- You want to increase your comfort level.
- After working in noisy conditions, you are unusually tired.
- Maybe your doctor recommended it.

HOW TO SELECT PROTECTION:

All Hearing Protection Devices (HPD) do not provide the same level of protection. We should consider the following aspects:

- The most common types of hearing protection are the ear muffs and ear plugs, which are worn inside the ears. Muffs are said to be more comfortable to use over long periods of time. Disposable ear plugs are popular for short time use. They are inexpensive and can be thrown away after each use.
- All materials do not block the same amount of sound. Each Hearing Protection Device (HPD) manufacturer must note on his label the amount of sound that his device will reduce. The Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) will be listed on the package. According to standards, a NRR that shows a device to reduce to a 30 will actually reduce noise levels to about 15 decibels (dB). For example, a 95 dB noise level could be reduced to 80 dBs with the device. HPDs do not have to be expensive. Foam earplugs are about \$1 per pair, and ear muffs are about \$15 to \$30 per pair, depending upon the quality.

**Don't Let the Sound Leave
You -
Buy Adequate Hearing
Protection**

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BE AWARE-TAKE CARE!