Noise Induced Hearing Loss – Do's and Don'ts

Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent but 100% preventable. Once your hearing is gone, it does not come back.

By law, employers must take action when noise levels reach specific thresholds to prevent permanent hearing damage. The standard legal limit for an 8-hour shift is 85 decibels (dB); at this level, hearing protection is strictly mandatory, and noise zones must be signposted. However, employers must offer hearing protection and safety training as soon as daily average noise levels hit 80 dB.

✔ The Do's

- **Wear your PPE:** Always use provided hearing protection in designated noise zones.
- **Clean your hands:** Roll earplugs with clean hands to prevent ear infections.
- **Check the fit:** Ensure earplugs roll down smoothly and seal your ear canal completely.
- **Keep equipment maintained:** Equipment emits less noise when it is maintained inline with the manfacturers instructions.
- **Keep your distance:** Stay away from noisy machinery, tools or activities if you are not involved.
- **Look for signs:** Look out for blue hearing protection mandatory warning signs.
- **Report extreme noise:** Tell your supervisor if a machine sounds louder than usual.
- **Take quiet breaks:** Spend your rest breaks in designated quiet areas to let ears recover.

✘ The Don'ts

- **Never ignore the rule:** Do not remove hearing protection "just for a quick minute".
- **Do not use music earbuds:** Standard wireless earbuds do not block out industrial site noise and can be a course of distraction and cause a safety risk.
- **Never modify your PPE:** Do not cut earplugs or alter earmuffs to make them "more comfortable".
- **Do not reuse single-use plugs:** Discard disposable foam earplugs at the end of every shift.
- **Do not shove plugs in deeply:** Avoid forcing earplugs too far into your ear canal.
- **Never ignore ear ringing:** Do not dismiss ringing or muffled hearing; report it immediately.