

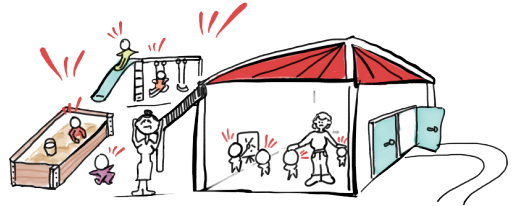
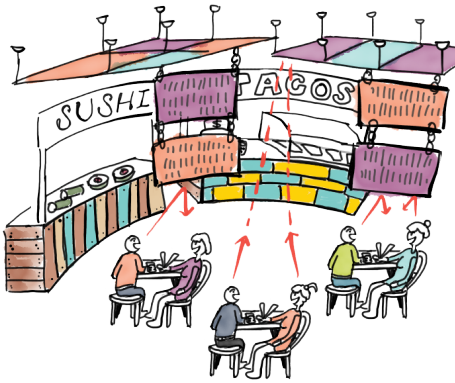
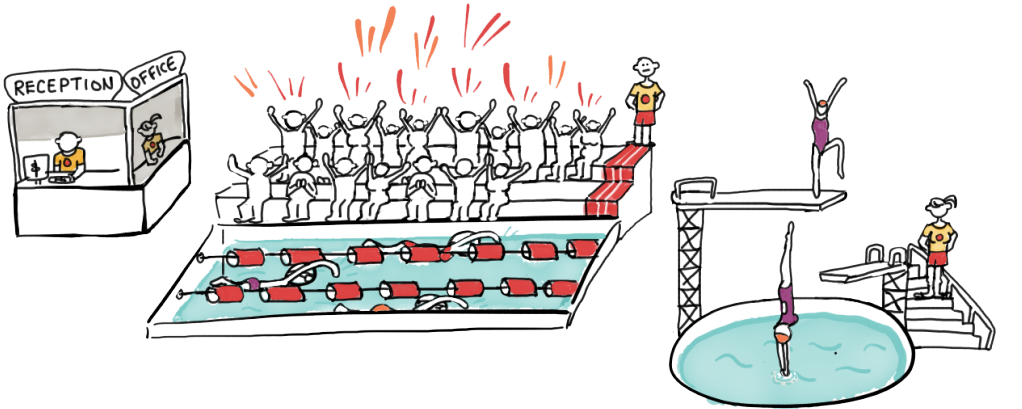


NOISE

Workers' version

# HOW NOISY IS YOUR WORKPLACE?





Your health at work is as important as your safety. One way that you can be harmed at work is through exposure to hazardous noise.

# IS YOUR WORK TOO NOISY?



Do you use noisy power tools or machinery at work such as jackhammers or explosive powered tools?

YES NO



Do you find it harder to hear people and things as the day goes on?

YES NO



Do you experience a ringing in your ears during the day or at night, or have muffled hearing? You might not be able to hear the beginning of sentences or when people have their backs to you.

YES NO



Do you need to raise your voice to communicate with someone about one metre away?

YES NO



Do you find that there is too much noise or that you can't clearly hear instructions or warning signals?

YES NO



Are the noise levels at your work loud enough to need hearing protection?

YES NO

If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions, you may be at risk of losing your hearing.

# FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD PROTECT YOUR HEARING AT WORK

1

If we act together,  
we can manage the  
effects of harmful  
noise on hearing

5

Hearing loss is  
often irreversible



2

Hearing loss  
is preventable

4

Workplace noise  
can be harmful  
to hearing

3

Good hearing  
is part of good  
worker health

1

If we act together, we can manage the effects of harmful noise on hearing. Get involved with identifying risks arising from noise related hazards, and suggest practical ways to manage these risks.

2

**Hearing loss is preventable.** Around 30% of all workers in New Zealand are exposed to hazardous noise at work at least a quarter of their work time. By helping to identify noise sources, correctly wearing the right hearing protection (if needed) and following the health and safety instructions of your work, you can protect your hearing. Outside work, think about ways to protect your hearing when doing noisy activities, like mowing lawns.

3

**Good hearing is part of good worker health.** With good health, you are more likely to be more engaged, have higher levels of productivity and be able to keep working for longer.

4

**Work noise can be harmful to hearing.** If you are exposed to hazardous noises over a long period of time, the nerve cells in the inner ear become damaged, and eventually stop responding to sound. This is noise induced hearing loss. Hearing damage can also occur from a sudden loud noise, extended exposure to vibrations from noisy machinery or ototoxic chemicals (chemicals that damage your hearing) found in substances such as paints, thinners, glues.

5

**Hearing loss is irreversible, which means that your hearing is not going to come back.** Hazardous noise levels can cause hearing loss, or tinnitus (a ringing in the ears). This is because the ears can no longer respond to some or all sounds. Damaged hearing reduces your ability to hear high frequency sounds, and some common consonant sounds such as t, k, s, sh and p. Noise-induced hearing loss is gradual, and most people don't notice damage to their hearing until it is too late.

Your business has a duty to protect your health and safety, and must take steps to manage the risks from hazardous noise levels in your work. You can play a part in helping your business to protect you.

# WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO?

## **Take care of your own health and safety**

Tell your manager, union rep or Health and Safety Representative (HSR) if you think that the noise levels in your work are too loud, or if you are concerned about your hearing. If you work in a noisy environment, take breaks in a quiet space away from noisy machinery or equipment as much as possible.

Work is not the only place you could be exposed to high levels of noise. Listening to loud music or mowing the lawns can damage your hearing too. Make sure you protect your hearing, both in and out of work.

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## **Take care of the health and safety of others**

Look out for other workers and encourage them to wear hearing protection when needed. Speak up if you feel worried about other people being at risk from harmful noise. You could talk to your HSR if you have one.

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## **Follow health and safety instructions from business**

If there are warning signs about noise in your work, make sure you follow them. Attend any hearing tests that your business has arranged for you. Make sure you understand the results of these tests – ask a competent person (an expert) if you are unsure.

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## **Wear hearing protection correctly if needed**

Your business should give you training on how to use, fit and maintain hearing protection correctly. Ask for a replacement if it is damaged, or needs to be cleaned. Report any problems with your hearing protection to your business or HSR (if you have one). You must not intentionally damage or use the hearing protection incorrectly.

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# WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE TO DO?

## **Provide a safe and healthy environment at work**

Ways that your business can reduce the risks from hazardous noise are:

- choosing quieter machinery or equipment
  - changing the layout of the work environment to create quiet areas of work
  - limiting the time you spend in noisy areas by rotating tasks or shifts
  - providing you with hearing protection if noise risks can't be eliminated or minimised.
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## **Seek your views when managing the risks associated with noise**

Your business needs to have easy ways for you to speak up if you think they aren't doing enough to manage noise risks at work. They should communicate with you or your HSR.

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## **Provide you with information and training**

Your business must provide you with information and training on how to manage hazardous noise risks, identify sources of noise, and protect your hearing. They should ask you what you already know about noise and work to build on this knowledge.

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## **Monitor your hearing on a regular basis**

Your business should arrange regular hearing tests if you are exposed to hazardous levels of noise at work. A competent person will determine if hearing tests are needed.

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## **Monitor the noise levels in your work**

If there are hazardous noise levels at your work, your business should get a competent person to carry out a detailed noise assessment to identify high risk areas and tasks. They must make the results of any monitoring available to you, consult with you when making decisions about how they will do the monitoring and what control measures they will put in place.

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