



Protect your hearing or lose it!

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- Clean your hands before fitting your earplugs.
- Replace your earplugs at regular intervals.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for washing your earplugs.
- Do not share your earplugs.

Semi-inserts/'canal caps'

- If you have ear trouble ask for advice.
- Do not stretch the headband.
- Clean your hands before fitting your semi-inserts.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for washing your semi-inserts.
- Replace your semi-inserts at regular intervals.
- Do not share your semi-inserts.

This pocket card contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

This pocket card is available in priced packs of 25 from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 2540 0. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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What is the problem with noise?

Sounds and noise are an important part of everyday life. In small amounts they are harmless, but if they are too loud they can cause problems. Hearing damage caused by noise is permanent and incurable - it can range from sounds appearing muffled to total deafness. Permanent 'tinnitus' or ringing in the ears can be caused as well.

What does the law say?

The Noise at Work Regulations 1989 say what you and your employer must do. It is important that you and your employer co-operate - it is your hearing that will be damaged if the danger is not controlled.

How do I know if there is a noise problem in my workplace?

- If you have to shout or raise your voice to be heard by someone just 2 m away, or if you have ringing in your ears after work there is probably a noise problem in your workplace. You need to tell your employer or safety/employee representative about this.





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Wear hearing protection properly and look after it

- Hearing protection should be provided by your employer when there is loud noise at work.
- Wear any hearing protection your employer gives to you.
- Wear your hearing protection **AT ALL TIMES** when in an ear protection zone.
- Do not take your hearing protection off when it is noisy - even for a short time.
- Make sure you get training from your employer in how and when to use your hearing protection.
- Follow any instructions supplied with your hearing protection.
- Do not use your hearing protection if it is damaged or does not fit properly - ask your employer for replacements.
- Report any problems with your hearing protection.
- Do not tamper with or modify your hearing protection.
- Store your hearing protection in a clean, dry place.

**Wear hearing protection to help save your hearing
from damage caused by loud noise at work**

What kind of hearing protection?

Wherever possible, your employer should provide you with a suitable range of effective hearing protection so you can choose the one that suits you best. The choices are: earmuffs, which completely cover the ear; earplugs, which are inserted in the ear canal; and semi-inserts (also called 'canal caps'), which cover the entrance to the ear canal.

Earmuffs

- Make sure your earmuffs totally cover your ears.
- Make sure your earmuffs fit tightly with no gaps between the seal and your head.
- Do not stretch the headband.
- Do not trap hair, jewellery, glasses, hats etc under the seal.
- Keep the seals and foam inside your earmuffs clean.
- If you see splits or cracks in the seals of your earmuffs ask for another pair.

Earplugs

- Insert your earplugs properly - if you're not sure how to, ask for instructions.
- If you have ear trouble - ask for advice.
- Only use disposable earplugs once.

