

# **NOISE: A Simple guidance for employees**

Noise is something we are exposed to every day:

- Socially (e.g. music, iPods, cinema, road traffic, etc.) or
- Noise experienced while at work.

Normally, we hear these sounds at safe levels that do not affect our hearing. However, when we are exposed to harmful noise—sounds that are too loud or loud sounds that last a long time—sensitive structures in our inner ear can be damaged, causing noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) or tinnitus.

## Tinnitus

- Ringing in the ears, it sounds trivial but is far from it;
- Most people have felt it at some time;
- In a lot of cases it fades away but after repeated exposure it can become permanent;
- Damaged 'receptor cells' tell your brain that a sound is being heard. The sounds heard can include a whistle, a ringing, a buzzing, a wind-like noise or a kind of 'shhh' noise;
- Minimal problem in a noise environment but can be profound when 'quiet';
- Can also be caused when flying, if you have a cold or have wax sitting against the ear drum, also at rock concerts.... These can trigger temporary bouts of tinnitus.

## Noise Induced Hearing Loss – NIHL

- Can be caused by a one-time exposure to an intense "impulse" sound, such as an explosion, or by continuous exposure to loud sounds over an extended period of time.
- Hearing losses build up over time, usually without the person knowing about it.
- The effects are seen first in the higher frequencies meaning people start to miss out on the sharper consonants in speech such as 's', 'c', 't', etc.
- Speech can become a low-frequency mumble meaning it's harder to follow.
- This loss in hearing is permanent.

## Noise levels and exposure times

<b>Decibel level</b>	<b>Action you need to take</b>
<b>Less than 80 dB(A)</b>	<b>No need to act</b>
<b>Between 80 and 85 dB(A)</b>	<b>Hearing protection is advised</b>
<b>Over 85 dB(A)</b>	<b>Mandatory – You must wear hearing protection</b>



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Below is a table showing how quickly hearing can be damaged if the ears are not protected.

Exposure level	Time (Unprotected)	Typical equipment
85	8 hrs	At the side of an FEL or dumper
88	4 hrs	
91	2 hrs	
94	1 hr	Adjacent to a Coating Plant burner
97	30 mins	
100	15 mins	Adjacent to screens in a screenhouse
103	8 mins	
106	4 mins	
109	2 mins	
112	1 min	
115	30 secs	Using a Stihl Saw
118	15 secs	
121	8 secs	

### **Summary**

- Only enter areas where the noise level has been established and the correct controls, including where appropriate, hearing protection have been applied/supplied.
- Areas of known high noise levels will often be displayed on a plan. Notices will be displayed as appropriate.
- Only wear hearing protection provided by the company. Note: cotton wool offers no protection whatsoever.
- Look after your hearing protection; keep it clean, replace it and report defects to your supervisor.
- You may be at risk when approaching others who are carrying out noisy activities, i.e. Work with grinders and cutting etc.. Be aware, and warn those around you if you start noisy tasks.
- If you need to raise your voice to hold a conversation, you should be wearing your hearing protection.

Training Register		
Name (please print)	Signature	Date of training

