



The Prevention Toolkit

Preventing occupational noise-induced hearing loss

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The Prevention Toolkit

In this toolkit, you will find resources to promote noise and hearing safety, and prevent noise-induced hearing loss in your workplace. You'll also find activities you can do each week of National Safe Work Month.

Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit is designed for businesses of all sizes and is aimed at persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs), Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), managers, and workers.

What's included in the toolkit?

The toolkit has resources including factsheets, posters, infographics, social media templates and a staff newsletter template. There are also ideas for use on social media and other communication channels.

// Hearing Australia is committed to helping workplaces prevent avoidable hearing loss caused by noise exposure. Noise-induced hearing loss is avoidable, and more needs to be done to protect workers in high-risk industries such as construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. No one should lose their hearing because of their job."

Kim Terrell, Managing Director, Hearing Australia

About National Safe Work Month

October is National Safe Work Month. It is a time to commit to building safe and healthy workspaces for all Australians.

This year's theme is "for everyone's safety, work safely"



"All workers have the right to a healthy and safe working environment, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged. National Safe Work Month is the perfect time to refocus on health and safety in the workplace and to commit to making WHS a central part of how we do business in Australia."

- Michelle Baxter, CEO Safe Work Australia

Each week has a different health and safety topic.

Weekly Topics

Week 1

Working together to manage risks at work
(1-8 October)

Week 2

Working together to protect workers' mental health
(9-15 October)

Week 3

Working together to support all workers
(16-22 October)

Week 4

Working together to ensure a safe and healthy workplace
(23-31 October)



Raising awareness of noise exposure during National Safe Work Month

Exposure to loud and harmful noise is a serious health and safety hazard in Australian workplaces. Occupational noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most common yet preventable occupational diseases¹, with an estimated 1.1 million workers exposed to hazardous levels of noise at work².

Hearing loss caused by noise exposure is preventable. However, the risks posed by noise are often overlooked by PCBUs and workers alike. Hearing loss can have negative effects on a person's health and wellbeing.

// Hearing is an important sense that keeps us connected to people and the world around us. Studies have shown that unaddressed hearing loss can lead to social withdrawal, isolation and decline in personal relationships. Communication is key to fulfilling relationships and addressing hearing loss is integral to maintaining these positive aspects of wellbeing."

(Karen Hirschausen, Principal Audiologist, Hearing Australia)

Occupational noise-induced hearing loss also has significant financial costs. One study estimated that occupational noise-induced hearing loss cost the Australian economy \$29.7 billion, due to wellbeing and productivity losses². It is therefore critical that Australian workplaces take a preventative approach to hazardous noise exposure.

Did you know?

Over 5,800 workers compensation claims for deafness were accepted in 2021-2022, with 98% attributed to long term noise exposure³. However, there are likely many more workers who have noise-induced hearing loss.

By implementing effective measures to reduce noise exposure and promote hearing health in the workplace, employers can create a safer, more productive, and more inclusive work environment for everyone.

So, this National Safe Work Month, let's commit to reducing noise exposure and for everyone's safety, work safely!



1. Si S, Lewkowski K, Fritschi L, Heyworth J, Liew D, Li I. Productivity Burden of Occupational Noise-Induced Hearing Loss in Australia: A Life Table Modelling Study. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2020 Jun 29;17(13):4667. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17134667. PMID: 32610505; PMCID: PMC7369732.

2. Lewkowski K, Heyworth JS, Li IW, Williams W, McCausland K, Gray C, Ytterstad E, Glass DC, Fuente A, Si S, Florath I. Exposure to noise and ototoxic chemicals in the Australian workforce. Occupational and environmental medicine. 2019 May 1;76(5):341-8.

3. Safe Work Australia, *National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics*, preliminary data for 2021-22.

How to use the resources during Safe Work Month

Week 1 - Working together to manage risks at work

Key Messages

- Raising your voice to be heard is a sign your workplace is noisy and action should be taken
- Anyone can identify risks in the workplace. Workers should report any hazards and PCBUs should take action quickly
- It is the responsibility of the PCBU to eliminate or minimise workers' exposure to noise as much as possible

Suggested Activities

- Review your risk management plan to ensure you've identified all risks to workers' hearing
- Complete a noise map at your workplace
- Share and discuss the resources with your health and safety representatives (HSR)
- Share the social post via your social channels

Suggested Resource

Assessing noise infographic
Noise hazards infographic
Hierarchy of controls infographic
Week 1 social media post

Week 2 - Working together to protect workers' mental health

Key Messages

- Hearing loss can impact people's ability to communicate with colleagues and loved ones. This can lead to self-isolation and depression
- Noise-induced hearing loss is irreversible, so focusing on prevention is important for long term mental wellbeing

Suggested Activities

- Organise a SafeTea event and discuss the impacts of hearing loss on mental health
- Review your policies and procedures for audiometric testing
- Share the social post via your social channels

Suggested Resource

Protect your hearing at work factsheet
Audiometric testing for workers factsheet
Week 2 social media post

Week 3 - Working together to support all workers

Key Messages

- New workers should be trained in how to identify and report noise hazards

Suggested Activities

- Display poster on health and safety noticeboard
- Share and discuss resources in a toolbox talk
- Share the social post via your social channels

Suggested Resource

Hearing Protection poster
Noise hazards infographic
Week 3 social post

Week 4 - Working together to ensure a safe and healthy workplace

Key Messages

- Prevention and early detection are key to minimising risks before they happen
- If you can "hear" something – say something
- Leaders play a vital role in setting the tone for healthy workplaces

Suggested Activities

- Develop a statement of commitment to prevention and share publicly
- Include the newsletter article in your next staff newsletter
- Share the social post via your social channels

Suggested Resource

Protect your hearing at work factsheet
Hearing Protection poster
Week 4 social media post

Resources

Infographics

How to find noise hazards

Look & Listen

Ask

Act

Identify any potential risks and hazards from noise by:

- Walking through the workplace at different times during the day, looking and listening for noisy activities and equipment
- Checking manufacturer's information (including labels) to determine noise levels of tools and plant equipment

Assess potential risks and hazards by:

- Consulting workers about their exposure to noisy activities during the work day and how they can be protected
- Talking to manufacturers and suppliers about noise emissions and safety guidance for their products

Control potential noise hazards and risks by:

- Identifying and implementing appropriate control measures
- Implementing manufacturer recommended and additional controls, and training workers on their use
- Monitoring and reviewing control measures regularly to ensure they remain effective

Hearing Australia | safe work australia | national safe work research

This document is for informational purposes only. More information is available from the appropriate Work Health and Safety Regulator in your state or territory.

Assessing Noise Infographic

Audience - Employers and Employees
Developed by - Hearing Australia and Safe Work Australia

Noise Hazards

Common noise sources, their typical sound levels in decibel (dB) and time limits

140dB	Jet engine 140 dB - 0 sec
130dB	Rivet hammer 130 dB - less than 1 sec
120dB	Rock drill 120 dB - 7 secs
110dB	Chainsaw 110 dB - less than 2 mins
100dB	Sheet metal workshop 100 dB - 15mins
90dB	Circular saw 94 dB - 1 hour
80dB	Front end loader 85 dB - 8 hours
70dB	Loud conversation 70 dB
60dB	Normal conversation 60 dB

Adopted from Safe Work Australia

Noise Hazards Infographic

Audience - Employers and Employees
Developed by - Hearing Australia

Keep the noise down!

As a PCBU, you have a duty to eliminate or minimise the risks of noise-induced hearing loss using the hierarchy of controls.

Hierarchy of controls

- eliminate (most effective)
- substitute
- isolate
- engineering controls
- administrative controls
- PPE (least effective)

Ask yourself:

- Elimination**: Does the task need to be done?
- Substitution**: Is there another way to do the task which makes less noise? Can you substitute noisy machinery with quieter options?
- Isolation**: Can you create separated space/s for, enclose, or move noisy equipment away from workers?
- Engineering Controls**: Can you automate noisy machinery, or operate it remotely so workers are not exposed to the noise? Can you check and maintain machinery to make sure it is not making unnecessary noise? Can the equipment or its parts be made from materials that make less noise?
- Administrative Controls**: Can you reduce the number of workers who may be exposed to noise? Can you minimise the time workers spend in noisy spaces? Can you provide advance notice when noisy tasks are scheduled so workers can limit exposure? Can you provide quiet areas for rest breaks for workers exposed to noise?
- PPE**: After applying all other controls, consider if workers need to wear personal hearing protection. What hearing protection do people need to work safely?
 - It must be fit for purpose and protect the worker from noise
 - It must be a suitable size and fit and reasonably comfortable for the worker
 - It must be maintained, repaired or replaced so that it remains effective
 - Workers must be trained in how to effectively use it
 - It must be worn correctly.

safe work australia | Hearing Australia

Scan the QR code
 Find out more on the Safe Work Australia website:
[swa.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/noise](https://www.swa.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/noise)

Hierarchy of Controls Infographic

Audience - Employers and Employees
Developed by - Hearing Australia and Safe Work Australia

[Download resources here](#)

Resources

Social Media Templates

Below are some suggestions for social media posts you can adapt and change to suit your audience. Don't forget to tag us!

Week 1 - Working together to manage risks at work



Want to know if you're at risk of noise-induced hearing loss?

Ask yourself:

- Do you need to raise your voice to be heard at work?
- Do you notice your hearing gets worse throughout the day or after work?
- Do you have trouble hearing instructions or warning signals?
- Do you experience tinnitus (ringing in the ears) during or after work?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, there's a chance you're being exposed to hazardous noise and are at risk of hearing loss.

Take steps to protect your hearing. Find out more at <https://www.hearing.com.au/Hearing-loss/Prevention>

#HearingLoss #HearingHealth #HealthAndSafety #SafeWorkMonth

Week 2 - Working together to protect workers' mental health



It's Safe Work Month!

We want more people to know about the threat of hazardous levels of noise at work. Imagine struggling to chat with your colleagues or loved ones. Noise-induced hearing loss isn't just a workplace issue, it can effect all parts of your life.

The good news is noise-induced hearing loss is preventable. Take steps to protect your hearing, learn about safe noise levels and encourage your workmates to do the same. Find out more at <https://www.hearing.com.au/Hearing-loss/Prevention>

#HearingLoss #HearingHealth #HealthAndSafety #SafeWorkMonth

 [Download resources here](#)

Resources

Social Media Templates

Below are some suggestions for social media posts you can adapt and change to suit your audience. Don't forget to tag us!

Week 3 - Working together to support all workers



Hearing loss doesn't clock off when you do. It lingers, affecting your life long after you've hung up your work boots.

The good news is there are simple things you can do to reduce your exposure to harmful levels of noise at work. Your employer should put controls in place that eliminate, isolate, reduce noise exposure and provide adequate hearing protection.

To ensure maximum effectiveness, your hearing protection should be:

- ✓ Comfortable and easy to use
- ✓ Clean and well-maintained
- ✓ Compatible with other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- ✓ Fit for purpose

Let's make workplaces safer and quieter.

Find out more at <https://www.hearing.com.au/Hearing-loss/Prevention>

#HearingLoss #HearingHealth #HealthAndSafety #SafeWorkMonth

Week 4 - "Working together to ensure a safe and healthy workplace"



Curious about how you can protect your ears from noise at work?

Here are some tips to protect your hearing at work:

- Familiarise yourself with safety guidelines and procedures.
- Participate in training programs related to hearing protection and workplace safety.
- Report hearing-related issues or discomfort immediately to your supervisor, safety officer, or HR.
- Always wear proper hearing protection, such as earmuffs or earplugs, in noisy environments.

Find out more at <https://www.hearing.com.au/Hearing-loss/Prevention>

#HearingLoss #HearingHealth #HealthAndSafety #SafeWorkMonth

 [Download resources here](#)

Resources

Newsletter

October is National Safe Work Month

It is estimated that over 1.1 million Australians are exposed to hazardous levels of noise at work.

The workplace is one of the most common sources of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). However, this is by far the most preventable kind of hearing loss.

This National Safe Work Month, Hearing Australia is urging employers to take action and protect the hearing health of workers. The organisation has released a new toolkit with useful resources and information on workplace noise and ways to help prevent noise-induced hearing loss.

Hearing Australia Principal Audiologist Karen Hirschausen says, "Workplace noise can and should be managed by implementing a range of control methods – and that can be as simple as limiting time spent in noisy environments, using quiet equipment and ensuring you wear appropriate hearing protection.

"People often ask 'what's too loud?' Essentially, if you're in a situation where you need to raise your voice to be understood at conversational distance (1-2 metres), then the noise is probably too loud. Repeated or lengthy exposure to sounds above 85 decibels, can cause permanent damage."

 [Download the toolkit](#)

Share it with your networks and together we can work to protect and preserve workers' hearing.



Additional resources

[Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists](#)

[Department of Health and Aged Care](#)

[Comcare](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

[Safe Work Australia's Model Code of Practice](#)

[SafeWork NSW](#)

[SafeWork SA](#)

[WorkSafe ACT](#)

[WorkSafe QLD](#)

[WorkSafe Victoria](#)

[WorkSafe WA](#)