



SHIFT BRIEFING



HEARING PROTECTION – OSHA’S ACTION LEVEL & PERMISSIBLE EXPOSURE LIMITS

Noise is considered the most preventable occupational injury because almost 100% of exposure to dangerous noise in the workplace is preventable.

OSHA establishes two limits on noise exposure in the workplace.

Action Level of 85 decibels - OSHA provides an Action Level when exposure to something, in this case, noise, is nearing a dangerous level, and OSHA wants the employer to take steps to start to control the noise.

Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) of 90 decibels – Remember, a PEL is an exposure that most workers should not have any injurious effects from exposure for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year, over a 30-year career.

We can do better than this minimum standard!

OSHA uses a 5 decibel exchange rate. This means when the noise level is increased by 5 decibels, the amount of time a person can be exposed to a certain noise level to receive the same dose is cut in half. This is why OSHA allows 8 hours of exposure to 90 decibels but only 4 hours to 95 decibels and only 2 hours to 100 decibels.

ASK: What Would this Mean to You if a Muffler was Missing or Rotted?

In general, we should use hearing protection when working with or around loud equipment like lawnmowers, weed whackers, backpack blowers, backhoes, front-end loaders, and circular saws.

Usually, a calibrated Sound Pressure Level Meter would be used to determine the noise level in the immediate area. However, several smartphone apps are available that can give you a pretty good idea of the noise level in your work area. Search in your app store.



The “NIOSH Sound Level Meter” app



If you have an iPhone, NIOSH recognizes the results of the SPLnFFT app.

To use one of the apps, place the phone on your shoulder, next to your ear, this is your Hearing Zone. If you get a consistent reading over 85 decibels, please let **Who-Insert Name** know, and we will investigate further.