

## Why Protecting Your Hearing is So Important!

### What is Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is a reduction of hearing, which can limit the ability to hear the sound frequency range that encompasses human speech, impairing their ability to communicate. Hearing loss can make social activities outside of the workplace less enjoyable and make activities in the work place more dangerous.

### What Causes Hearing Loss

Sound waves are energy pressure waves that travel through the air, and are picked up by the human ear. Loud noises created larger pressure waves which then creates more stress on the ear. If the noise is loud enough or an individual is exposed for a long enough duration. The pressure waves will cause damage on the ear and will destroy the cells in the ear.

Hearing loss can be either temporary or permanent depending on the situation. Temporary hearing loss is caused by short term exposure to a loud noise, and can lead to a “ringing” in the ears (tinnitus). These effects may go away within a few minutes or hours after leaving the noisy area, like a concert. Repeated exposure to loud noises can lead to permanent hearing loss.

### What To Do To Protect Hearing

The majority of hearing loss could have been prevented. Wearing proper hearing protection is the easiest solution to limit noise exposure. When using hearing protection, make sure that it is worn correctly. Incorrect use of hearing protection will not be beneficial at all, and the individual will still be at risk for hearing loss.

### Why Should I Care?

Hearing loss can interfere with the individual’s ability to enjoy normal activities such as socializing with friends and family or activities they enjoy. However, hearing loss is a double edged sword, as hearing loss can effect an individual’s performance in the work place. An individual with hearing loss is more at risk for an injury or accident, due to the interference of communication that comes with not being able to hear. An individual might not be able to hear a warning signal, or they might not be able to understand safety instructions correctly, creating an unsafe situation for the individual and the workers around them. Hearing loss is irreversible, so when it happens, there is little that can be done.

