

# TOOLBOX TOPIC – MARCH 2010 (All Departments/Projects)



**CORKE INSTRUMENT ENGINEERING (AUSTRALIA) PTY. LTD.**

**NOISE**

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nThis presentation is designed to give a general understanding of the requirements associated when working in areas that may expose you to high levels of “NOISE”.

nThis presentation is a company training awareness toolbox and is applicable to all employees, it is designed to give all employees an understanding of the need for protection and awareness when working in areas that may expose you to high levels of “NOISE”.

nPlease be advised that specific procedures surrounding noise may be applicable at client sites that you work on and these should be followed whilst working on those sites.

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## What is noise?

n Noise is defined as unwanted sound. But what is unwanted by some may be wanted by others. The ear does not differentiate between noise and sound. That is done by the brain.

n A small or moderate amount of noise can be enjoyable or stimulating, while exposure to an excessive amount of noise can cause damage to health and well being.

n Noise can affect us in two ways:

n Annoyance: when you are simply annoyed or irritated by the noise.

n Physical damage: when the noise actually damages the delicate hearing mechanism within the inner ear.

n You may not find a noise annoying but it may be sufficiently loud enough to damage your hearing.

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## Hearing Damage

- Exposure to loud noise for long periods of time, such as when you are working in a high noise environment, can lead to permanent hearing loss.
- Excessively loud noise is when you need to raise your voice or shout to carry out a conversation at arm's length.
- The first sign of hearing loss due to noise exposure is difficulty hearing in noisy situations such as at the dinner table, in a crowd, or in any situation where there is competing background noise.

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## **Tinnitus**

Sometimes a hearing loss may be accompanied by tinnitus (ringing in the ears or head noises) when there is no external noise present. Tinnitus may come and go, may be aggravated by other loud continuous or impulsive noise, maybe triggered by exposure to loud noise, or may be an indication that you have ear damage. It can be a very distressing condition.

## **Can a hearing aid make up for hearing loss?**

Hearing loss is not a simple problem. It cannot be corrected like some vision problems can be with spectacles. A hearing aid is basically an amplifier. It can make up for the loss of loudness, but not for the loss of clarity or reduced range of frequencies.

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## How much noise is too much?

nIf you need to raise your voice or shout in order to be understood in background noise, then the noise is too loud. Either do something to limit the noise, such as turn it off or turn it down, or move away from the noise.

nIf performing a task and you can't limit the noise or move away, take appropriate action and wear hearing protection suitable for the level of noise. This may be single or double hearing protection (i.e. earplugs and earmuffs).

nIf your ears “ring” after you have been in loud noise, or the world sounds a little quieter, then the noise level was hazardous to you hearing.

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## Leisure and music

Don't imagine for a moment that only workplace noise that has an effect on your hearing. The ear cannot distinguish between noise produced by work activities and leisure activities.

***§ If you attend night clubs, motor races or fireworks displays take earplugs with you. Learn to fit earplugs correctly, because they offer little protection if poorly fitted.***

***§ Take “time out” periodically in a quiet area, or limit the amount of time you spend exposed to the high noise.***

***§ If you are listening to your personal stereo with your earphones and you don't hear someone speak to you, then the music is too loud. Personal stereos turned to hazardous levels are an increasing cause of hearing damage, particularly amongst young people.***

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## Noise Regulations

nThe National Occupational Health and Safety Commission sets the national standard for noise exposure in the workplace ([www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)).

nMost States and Territories adopt this national exposure standard. However, you should check with the Occupational Health and Safety Authority in your State or Territory for the precise requirements for your workplace.

nNoise exposure in the workplace is minimised through risk management, ranging from removal or elimination of the noise source to reliance on hearing protectors such as ear plugs and/or earmuffs.

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## Prevention: What can you do?

nDamage to hearing due to noise exposure is cumulative. This means the higher the noise level and the longer the exposure, the greater the damage. It's like exposure to the sun and ultraviolet radiation. There is a degree of recovery during non-exposure time, but in the long term, the more exposure, the more damage.

nDo not deliberately expose yourself to very high sound levels such as noisy machinery or loud rock concerts.

nIf your work place is very noisy, talk to your OH&S officer about making it quieter. It is an employer's responsibility to provide a safe work environment.

nLimit your exposure by reducing the time of exposure and/or the loudness of the noise.

nIf you cannot avoid loud sound, eg mowing the lawn, then you should protect your ears with earplugs or earmuffs. Earplugs are cheap and can be purchased at a pharmacy or hardware store. Cotton wool does not provide adequate protection.

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## Prevention: What can you do?

- n Sudden loud noise, such as explosions, gunfire, loud whistles or sirens can also cause instant and permanent damage to your hearing.
- n For musicians, who are particularly at risk, a variety of special plugs are available from most hearing aid providers.
- n You should give your ears frequent rest from noise.
- n Remember CAT:  
**C**over your ears, **A**void the noise, **T**urn it down!

*Look after your ears.*

*If you damage your hearing, it won't come back.*