Hearing Protection Safety

Acknowledgements: National Safety Council

In time, overexposure decreases our ability to hear. Older workers might confuse work-related hearing loss with hearing loss due to aging. It is possible to slow down or stop noise-induced hearing loss by taking precautions. It is important to know that overexposure to noise does not necessarily take a long time. Short periods of very high noise can cause overexposure. For example, working for only 15 minutes with a gas-powered quick-cut saw or grass cutting equipment will lead to overexposure for that day.

Noise is generally measured in decibels (dB). The scale commonly used to measure noise that might harm human hearing is the A scale. Decibels on the A scale are therefore described as dBA. There are several apps you can download to your phone to measure noise. You can do this by searching "noise meter" or "decibel meter". You should wear hearing protection if you are exposed to noise levels such as:

- More than 85 dBA for 8 hours
- More than 88 dBA for 4 hours
- More than 91 dBA for 2 hours

Most power tools and equipment used in construction operate well over these levels. Since it is difficult to reduce noise levels on site, the next best choice is hearing protection. The two main types of hearing protection are muffs and plugs. The University provides hearing protection for areas where it is required onsite. Grounds Personnel should be utilizing hearing protection as all times when cutting. Carpentry shop should be wearing hearing protection during operations in the shop areas with sawing equipment. ALL personnel that access the roof of Cajunfield should be using hearing protection before going up on the room of the pressboxes, in the event the LRAD system is activated.

Common reasons we don't use hearing protection:

- I can't hear other workers
- My machine sounds different
- I'm used to the noise
- Protectors are uncomfortable
- I have already lost some of my hearing, why should I wear hearing protection now.

To place earplugs in correctly:

Reach over your head with your free hand and pull you **e**ar gently up and slightly out to help open up the ear canal. Insert the rolled up earplug with a slight turning motion until it is well inside your ear canal. The entire length of the plug should fit inside the ear with only a small amount protruding. (Easy steps: 1. Roll the earplug around to smash with clean hands 2. Pull the ear up and slightly back to open the canal 3. Insert the rolled up plug with a slight turning motion until it is well inside your ear canal).