

Building site plant and operations are often very noisy. Exposure to excessive noise can, over a period of time lead to permanent hearing loss. In addition, noise is very wearing on the nerves and can cause irritability and loss of concentration leading to mistakes and accidents.

The delicate mechanism in our ears wears out gradually as we get older. Loud noise wears it out more quickly, leading to premature deafness. There is no cure. Prevention is required by The Noise at Work Regulations.

What to do about Noise

1. Stand 2 meters away from your mate and try talking. If you cannot hear each other without shouting, action is required by the Regulations.
2. Action Level One. Noise measurements with a special instrument must be taken. This reads in decibels dB(A). 85 dB(A) is the maximum you are allowed to hear all day.
3. The owner of the noisy plant must take steps to reduce the reading to below 85 dB(A). This could be by – changing to a quieter machine, moving it further away, having it properly serviced, placing it inside an acoustic enclosure. Etc.
4. If, after doing all that is reasonably practical, the noise is still above 85 dB(A) you can ask for [hearing protection](#) (earplugs, muffs etc.) so that the noise you actually hear is below 85 dB(A).
5. Action Level Two. If the noise is still above 90 dB(A) the hearing protection must be provided and you must wear it.
6. Hearing protection must be suitable and a good fit. Ear defenders to BS 6444 will usually be adequate
7. Ear Plugs (Bilsom Dams) should be used once only and then discarded. Cotton Wool is totally ineffective as a noise protector.
8. Wash hands before touching and inserting ear plugs and do not use if you have an ear infection – tell your supervisor. KEEP EAR DEFENDERS CLEAN.
9. Owners of noisy plant may declare immediate surroundings to be an EAR PROTECTION ZONE AND erect warning signs. Ear protection must be worn continually in this zone. If you need to communicate with your mate more than by hand signals, step outside the first zone.
10. Remember your duty to 'comply and co-operate' and also take care of [PPE](#).



The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005

Between 80 dB (A) and 84 dB (A)

The employer has a duty to provide employees with ear protectors if requested.
The employee has the right to request suitable and efficient ear protectors.

At 85 dB (A) and above

The employer must provide his employees with suitable ear protectors and ensure that the employee wears them.
The employee has a duty to wear the ear protectors provided and report any defects.

