Develop a noise control plan.

You should develop a plan to reduce excessive noise over a stated time frame. You can get advice from a noise control engineer on how to:

(a) Control the noise at source. For example:

- Purchase equipment with the lowest noise rating.
- Ensure that, where practicable, machinery is installed with vibration isolators to reduce noise.
- Ensure that equipment is properly maintained and is operated according to correct procedures (e.g. with guards and panels in place).

(b) Isolate or insulate the processes that cause excessive noise. For example:

- Increase the distance between the noise source and the exposed person.
- Place barriers between the noise source and the exposed person.
- Decrease the time the at-risk person is exposed to the noise.

Noise Exposure Level (dBA) for an 8-hour day	Protection Needed
Over 115	Seek expert advice
110-115	Grade 5 Earmuffs
104-109	Grade 4 Earmuffs
98 -103	Grade 3 Earmuffs
92-97	Grade 2 Earmuffs or earplugs
86-91	Grade 1 Earmuffs or earplugs
85 and below	No protection needed for an 8-hour day

Provide employees with hearing protection.

If these methods cannot reduce noise exposure below the Workplace Exposure Standard of 85 dB(A) over an 8-hour day, employees must be provided with suitable hearing protectors.

Hearing protectors must be manufactured to a recognised Standard and must be the correct grade for the noise level encountered.

It is important that hearing protectors fit correctly. Many protectors designed for northern European males won't fit Asians, Polynesians and females.

Employees should be instructed on how to use and care for hearing protection equipment.

Educate employees on noise.

You should educate and inform all employees about the hazards of exposure to excessive noise.

You should:

- Discuss the noise hazards in their particular area of work;
- Discuss the programmes to control this noise and how employees are involved in them; and
- Explain the company's policy on hearing surveillance.

NOISE CAN CAUSE SERIOUS HARM

Noise-induced hearing loss is defined as "Serious Harm" in the Health and Safety in Employment Act. An employer who knowingly causes serious harm could face serious penalties.

A Message to Employers on Preventing Hearing Loss

OSH OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR TE TARI MAHI

WHAT IS NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS?

Noise-induced hearing loss is the damage to hearing caused by being exposed to too much noise for too long.

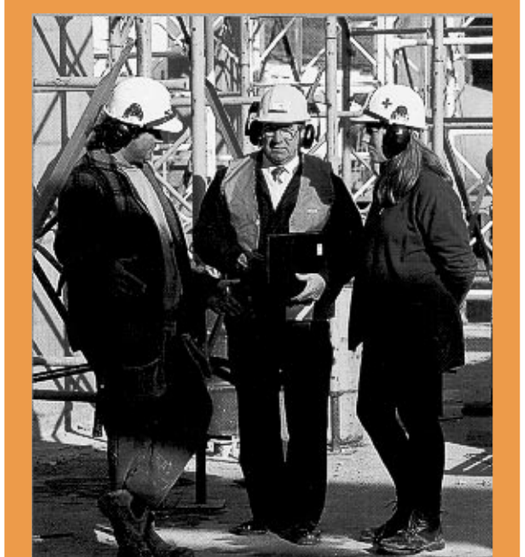
It creates enormous problems in daily life for the person affected and there's no cure for it.

Noise is a significant hazard in many New Zealand workplaces. Not only does excessive noise cause hearing loss, it can also cause stress-related health problems and increase the risk of accidents.

HOW MUCH NOISE IS TOO MUCH?

Daily exposure to noise above 85 decibels (dBA) will damage hearing.

A good rule of thumb is that a noise hazard probably exists if:



- There is difficulty in understanding what's being said at a distance apart of 1 metre;
- There is ringing in the ears (tinnitus) after exposure to the noise; or
- Hearing seems muffled after leaving a noisy area.

WHAT ARE MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 makes employers responsible for protecting employees from noise that could damage their hearing.

Employers must take all practicable steps to protect employees by:

1 Identifying noise hazards in the place of work.

Where noise levels exceed the Workplace Exposure Standard of 85 dB(A) over an 8-hour day, you are required to deal with the hazard by:

2 Controlling the noise at source; or

3 Isolating or insulating the processes that cause excessive noise.

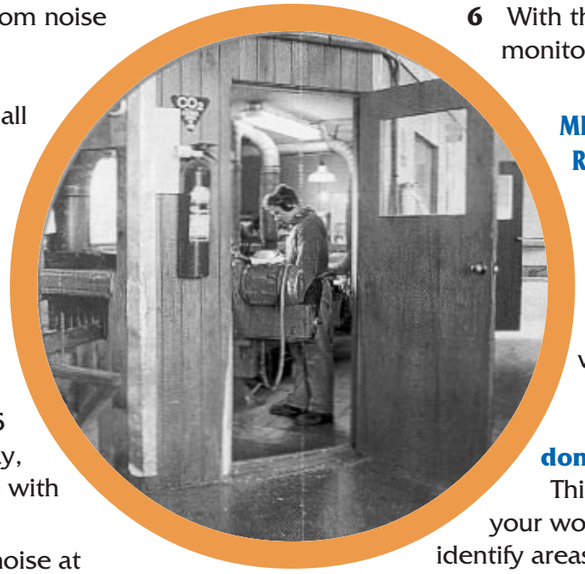
Until such time as these control measures are in place, or where such measures are not practicable, you must:

4 Provide hearing protection for employees.

You are also required to:

5 Monitor your employees' exposure to noise.

6 With their informed consent, monitor employees' hearing.



Sound Level (dBA)	Example of Noise Source	Effect on Hearing
150	Explosion	Instantaneous damage
140	Rifle shot	Damage over a brief period of time
130	Jet taking off	Threshold of pain
120	Power or chain saw	Damage after approx. 30 secs
110		
100	Pneumatic drill Grinding metal Noisy lawn mower	Some damage after approx. 15 mins
90	Heavy truck	Damage after 2 hours
80	Industrial sewing machine	At 85 dBA and below, an 8-hour day may be worked without using hearing protection devices
70	Street traffic	

MEETING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To meet these obligations, you need to set up an effective hearing conservation programme in your workplace.

Have a noise survey done.

This will tell you how noisy your workplace is, and will identify areas and machinery in the workplace that need attention.

It will also identify people (or tasks) at particular risk.

Provide hearing tests for your employees.

Audiometry tests will identify employees whose hearing is being damaged. Tests can be carried out at your work site by an occupational health nurse or an audiologist.

The results of the tests should be explained to the employee.