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www.dmp.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety

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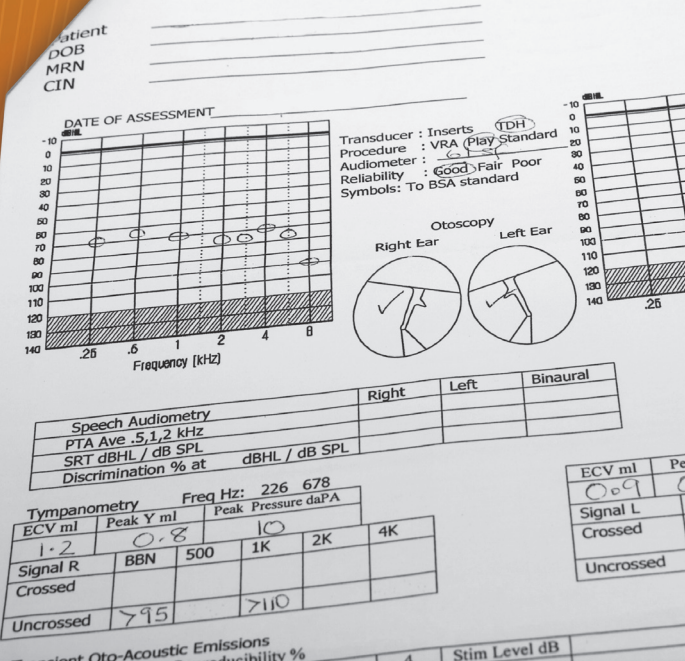
The advice provided in this pamphlet is basic safety and health information. Ensure you are familiar with your site procedures and, if uncertain, discuss this information with your supervisor and safety and health representative.



Government of Western Australia
Department of Mines and Petroleum
Resources Safety

Mine safety matters

Occupational noise



THE HAZARD

Large trucks and other mobile equipment, drilling equipment, portable tools (e.g. angle grinders) and process plants are common in the mining industry and can generate high noise levels.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN

Hearing loss can occur very quickly by sudden exposure to very high noise levels, or more slowly by long term exposure to higher than normal noise levels.

You may not notice hearing changes from one day to the next. Unfortunately, once the damage is done, there is no cure.

Common effects or signs of hearing loss include:

- sounds or speech seeming muffled, with difficulty telling words apart or picking out a voice in a crowd
- a distorted sense of loudness or hypersensitivity to sounds — sufferers may ask people to speak up, then complain that they are shouting

- tinnitus, a permanent ringing in the ears
- needing to excessively increase the volume of television or radio in order to hear them
- difficulty hearing properly on the telephone
- being unaware of happenings in your environment that you do not see, such as not hearing horns and other audible alarms.

You can determine whether your workplace noise levels are high and potentially dangerous by standing one metre from a colleague, and determining whether you must shout or raise your voice to be heard.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

- Use noise control equipment and hearing protectors in locations indicated by signage, or where noise levels are sensed to be high

- If you operate a machine fitted with silencers or enclosures, ensure they work properly and are properly used and maintained
- Use appropriate hearing protectors, such as earmuffs, earplugs, or both, and put them on before entering the noisy work area
- Maintain hearing protection, ensuring it is used properly and kept clean. Replace damaged or dirty protectors as they will not give adequate protection, and could cause ear infections
- Report any problems with noise control equipment or hearing protectors to your supervisor, and do not commence work in any noisy environment without satisfactory protection
- Seek medical advice if you suspect there is a problem with your hearing, and advise your medical practitioner if you work in a noisy workplace

- Cooperate with your employer during noise measurements, and assist by providing information to improve workplace noise management

NOISE MANAGEMENT

To reduce the impact of occupational noise on hearing:

- control noise at its source,
- restrict the spread of noise
- minimise the impact of noise on the hearer.

Employers should:

- minimise noise exposure by specifying the lowest practicable noise level of equipment for purchase (i.e. "Buy Quiet") and designing installations to minimise noise exposure during normal plant operation
- provide the best available noise control equipment

and hearing protection, together with education and instructions on their use, care and maintenance

- inform employees of all high noise level locations, by marking up hearing protection zones, and displaying warning signs, with instructions on avoiding hearing damage in the location
- regularly assess workplace noise levels and take action to reduce possible dangerous exposure

For further advice, refer to Part 7 Division 1 — Noise Control of the Mines Safety and Inspection Regulations 1995 and the *Noise control in mines* guideline available at www.dmp.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety.



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