

TOOLBOX TALK #15

UNDERSTANDING NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS

Nearly 15 percent of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 years old (about 26 million people) have hearing loss that may have been caused by exposure to noise at work or in leisure activities, this according to the Center for Disease Controls (CDC). In addition, as many as 16 percent of teens (ages 12 to 19) have reported some hearing loss that could have been caused by loud noise.

Often, people are not aware that they are putting their hearing at risk. While sounds of less than 75 decibels are not likely to cause hearing loss, long or repeated exposure to sounds at or above 85 decibels can cause hearing loss.

As a point of reference, think about these familiar sounds:

- Refrigerator humming: 45 dB
- Normal conversation: 60 dB
- Noise from heavy city traffic: 85 dB
- Motorcycles: 95 dB
- MP3 player at maximum volume: 105 dB
- Siren: 120 dB
- Firecrackers and guns: 150 dB



Many people don't realize how loud is "loud". Whether running equipment at work or the lawn mower or weed whacker at home, noise is noise. Pay attention to what you are being exposed to. Wear your hearing protection regardless of where you may be.