



**STATE SAFETY OFFICE**  
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD  
330 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD  
LATHAM, NEW YORK 12110



## **SAFETY MESSAGE 22-05**

### **May is Hearing Conservation Month**

Our hearing is precious to us. Once we diminish or lose our hearing, we can never fully recover it. Both on the job and at home there are many ways to be overexposed to sounds that can damage our hearing. It is important to realize how loud is too loud and how to protect yourself.

#### **Noise At Work**

Many tools, equipment, and processes in the workplace generate high levels of noise that will have a negative effect on the hearing of the exposed workers. According to the CDC, over 22 million workers are exposed to hazardous noise levels at work each year. Occupational hearing loss is one of the most common workplace injuries today in the United States.

#### **By the Numbers: Stats from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs**

- Tinnitus and hearing loss are the number [one and two health conditions](#), respectively, among military veterans at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers.
  - In 2017, there were 1.79 million disability compensation recipients for tinnitus and 1.16 million compensation recipients for hearing loss.
  - In addition, many Veterans who score normally on hearing tests have trouble understanding speech. This condition, auditory processing disorder or central auditory processing disorder (CAPD), is often associated with blast exposure.
- A [study](#) in 2015 found that 72% of Veterans with tinnitus also had a diagnosis of anxiety, 60% had depression, and 58% had both conditions.
- Paying an average of \$348.15 each, the VA buys one in five hearing aids sold annually in the U.S., according to that 2010 spending report, the last year that data was available.

Damage to our hearing can happen over a short time or over a longer extended period of time depending on the source of the sound. Short loud bursts of noise such as explosions or gunshots can damage our ears in a short time of being exposed. Less hazardous noise such as woodworking equipment, heavy equipment, and machinery can lead to damage over an extended amount of time being exposed to the noise.

## Noise At Home

While many people are overexposed at work, there are also many who are overexposed at [home](#). Many of your hobbies may also be causing hearing loss. Activities such as listening to loud music, shooting guns, woodworking, using a [lawnmower](#), riding a dirt bike, etc. will damage your hearing over time. It is important to understand what levels of noise will damage your hearing.

### What is Too Loud?

(Source: <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov>)

OSHA and NIOSH recommend staying under levels of 85 decibels over an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA).

Here are the average decibel ratings of some familiar sounds:

- Normal conversation- 60 decibels
- Heavy city traffic- 85 decibels
- Motorcycles- 95 decibels
- Circular saw- 100-105 decibels
- Listening to music with headphones at maximum volume- 105 decibels
- Sirens- 120 decibels
- Firecrackers and firearms- 150 decibels

### Hearing Damage Prevention

- The best way to protect yourself is to eliminate the exposure. That can be achieved by removing yourself from the area the noise is in or eliminating the excessive noise altogether.
- Engineering controls are the second-best choice in protection from noise. Sound barriers, enclosures, and noise dampening systems are examples of engineering controls that will bring down the level of noise in an area.
- Administrative controls such as training on using hearing protection, job rotation, breaks, and routine maintenance programs of equipment are some ways that protect Soldiers from being exposed to hazardous noise.
- PPE is the last line of defense. It is important to know the levels of noise that remain after applying the other techniques mentioned above. For noises between 85 decibels and 100 decibels on an 8 hour TWA, ear plugs will be enough to protect you if worn correctly. Over 100 decibels then double hearing protection is needed, an example is earplugs and earmuffs.

Your distance from the source of the sound and the length of time you are exposed to the sound are also important factors in protecting your hearing. A good rule of thumb is to avoid sounds that are too loud, too close, or last too long.

## Summary

Protect your hearing. [Once it goes, it is gone.](#) It is possible to regain some of your hearing back artificially through hearing aids, but it will never be the same as it was before it was damaged. Take hearing protection seriously.

To find previously published Safety Messages, go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

## New York Army National Guard Safety Office Points of Contact:

### Safety and Occupational Health Manager:

Alicia Howard

[alicia.l.howard.civ@army.mil](mailto:alicia.l.howard.civ@army.mil)

(518) 786-6097

### Occupational Health Nurse:

Valerie Schwalbach

[valerie.a.schwalbach.civ@army.mil](mailto:valerie.a.schwalbach.civ@army.mil)

(518) 786-4329

### Safety Specialist:

Matthew Williams

[matthew.s.williams117.mil@army.mil](mailto:matthew.s.williams117.mil@army.mil)

(518) 786-6040

### Safety Specialist:

Chuck Austin

[charles.b.austin2.civ@army.mil](mailto:charles.b.austin2.civ@army.mil)

(518) 786-6121

### M-Day Safety Specialists:

MSG Jerry Peace

[jerry.l.peace.mil@army.mil](mailto:jerry.l.peace.mil@army.mil)

### M-Day Safety Specialists:

CW3 David Morton

[david.t.morton.civ@army.mil](mailto:david.t.morton.civ@army.mil)

### M-Day Safety Specialists:

SFC Adama Ilboudo

[adama.ilboudo.mil@army.mil](mailto:adama.ilboudo.mil@army.mil)

### IH Technician

SFC Thomas Phipps

[Thomas.c.phipps.mil@army.mil](mailto:Thomas.c.phipps.mil@army.mil)