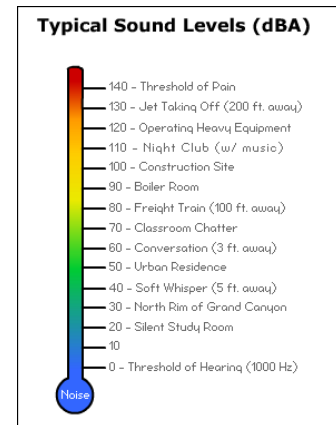


Current Findings: Occupational Hearing Loss

In the United States, over 11% of the U.S. working population has hearing difficulty. About 24% of the hearing difficulty among U.S. workers is caused by occupational exposures. Around 22 million of these workers are exposed to hazardous noise each year.¹

Occupational Hearing Loss (OHL) can occur when workers are exposed to loud noise. Noise is considered loud (hazardous) when it reaches 85 decibels or higher, or if a person has to raise his/her voice to speak with someone 3 feet away. Most U.S. workers exposed to loud noise on the job are required by government regulations to receive annual hearing tests.

In 2009, the NIOSH Occupational Hearing Loss Surveillance Project was created after a method was developed for obtaining large numbers of worker hearing tests. NIOSH epidemiologist Elizabeth Masterson, PhD, CPH, COHC, in collaboration with 18 data partners, collected nearly 9 million hearing tests.² Analysis produced estimates of the number of workers with OHL for each U.S. Industry and examined the risks.



It was found that subsections within the Mining, Construction and Manufacturing industries have the highest risk for hearing loss, particularly within Construction to be 24% or higher-(30% in Highway, Street and Bridge Construction). A surprising find was that **all industries** have workers with elevated risks for hearing loss. Hearing impaired workers have difficulty in hearing warning signals and what someone is saying, which can lead to accidents. All worksites should provide hearing protection for exposed laborers. No industry is safe from workers developing OHL.

Masterson, et al's paper on this topic, "Trends in Worker Hearing Loss by Industry Section, 1981-2010," was published in the January 2015 edition of the American Journal of Industrial Medicine.

¹ Occupational Hearing Loss (OHL Surveillance, Workplace Safety & Health Topics, NIOSH, 2015. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ohl/>.

² Collection Data on Worker Hearing Loss: Epidemiology in Action. Elizabeth Masterson, NIOSH Science Blog: Safe Healthier Workers, December 3, 2014. <http://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2014/12/03/epi-hl/>

Provided by: **WORKSAFE**
DAY