

Selecting hearing protection

Hearing protection is an absolute must if, on most days, your work is noisy enough that you have to raise your voice to be heard by someone 1 m (3 ft.) away. The following factors must be considered when deciding which hearing protection device is adequate for your needs:

- Daily noise exposure
- Hearing ability
- Communication demands
- Use of other personal protective equipment

- Temperature and climate
- Physical constraints of the worker or work activity
- Comfort

All forms of hearing protection are effective when worn properly, but the best hearing protector is the one you'll wear for the entire time you're exposed to noise. The brief overview of hearing protection below explains some of the factors that may influ-

ence your preference. There are many types of hearing protection, all of them useful, but there is no single protector that will work for everyone.

For more information on selecting and using hearing protection, visit WorkSafeBC.com and choose "Hearing Loss Prevention" from the Safety at Work topic list. You may also contact WorkSafeBC's occupational audiologist at 604 276-3090 (toll-free at 1 888 621-7233, local 3090) for assistance.

Earmuffs

Features — High visibility, size of dome allows you to control amount of sound reduction

Scenarios — Ideal if handling earplugs would be difficult or unhygienic (e.g., you're wearing gloves or your hands or work environment are dirty)

Non-foam earplugs

Features — Comfortable, pre-formed, inexpensive, reusable, come with handles or cords

Scenarios — Ideal if you need a bit less sound reduction and your hard hat or face shield might interfere with conventional earmuffs

Ear canal caps

Features — Earplugs on a band, worn under your chin

Scenarios — Ideal if you are in and out of noisy environments all day, as they can be put on and taken off quickly.

Foam earplugs

Features — Compact, can be used up to 10 times, often come with cords, high level of sound reduction

Scenarios — Ideal if you need lots of sound reduction and your hard hat or face shield might interfere with conventional earmuffs

Custom moulded earplugs

Features — Custom moulded to the shape of wearer's ear canal for good fit

Scenarios — Ideal if you have an unusual shape of ear canal, which could make it difficult to get a good fit with other earplugs

