

NOISE

Exposure to excessive noise will damage your hearing and may result in an unpleasant condition known as Tinnitus, which is more commonly known as ringing in the ears.

You can take measures to reduce the risk of damage to your hearing.

Some of these include:

- avoid going into areas where there are high levels of noise
- use acoustic enclosures (areas where a room or office is constructed to shut out high levels of noise outside the enclosure).

However, if your job requires that you go into noisy work areas, then you must:

- use hearing protectors (ear muffs or ear plugs)
- keep the length of time you may be exposed to a minimum.

The combination of the loudness or intensity of the noise you have been exposed to and the duration of the exposure is known as your Noise Dose.

Tarmac has a legal duty to measure the noise dose of its employees. Your manager holds this information, and you may consult the report.

If you are exposed to noise levels above 85dB(A) (noise is measured in decibels) you should be wearing hearing protection.

As a rough guide, if you have difficulty speaking to, or hearing, someone who is 1m away from you, then the background noise level is at or above 85dB(A) and you should be wearing hearing protectors.

Equipment or machinery often results in noise levels above 85dB(A), and a notice should indicate these areas. Where you see this notice you must wear hearing protectors. It is not an option or choice - it is mandatory.

Some people think that if they already suffer hearing loss, then they do not need to bother to look after their hearing. Unfortunately, exposure to noise has a cumulative effect, so if you already suffer hearing loss, further exposure to high levels of noise will make a bad situation even worse.

Places where you are likely to be exposed to noise levels above 85dB(A) and where hearing protection must be used are:

- near driers, particularly at the burner end
- screen rooms
- adjacent to some mixers (on coating plants particularly)
- primary crusher
- near weigh hoppers (on concrete plants) when weighing up
- adjacent to mobile plant or vehicles in enclosed areas.



SELECTING AND USING HEARING PROTECTORS

Two types are available:

- ear plugs
- ear muffs.



Both have their advantages and disadvantages, so it is often left to personal preference.

Whatever type you select, they should effectively seal the ear and must be kept clean.

Ear muffs are often mounted on a headband or attached to a helmet. The seal around the muff must completely enclose the outer ear and apply sufficient pressure to form a complete seal.

Ear muffs must be carefully selected to ensure correct protection (this information is provided by the manufacturer), and should be kept clean to avoid the risk of ear infection.

Ear plugs insert into the ear canal, and may be the disposable one-use type, or may be multi-use, such as those attached to a neckband or moulded specifically for you.



Ear plugs must be kept clean and handled with clean hands. Failure to do so may lead to an ear infection.

The type selected must be appropriate to the noise source and offer effective protection (again this information is provided by the manufacturer).

Look after your hearing – hearing loss is irreversible and permanent.

Ask the question – ‘Do you have any concerns about noise in your work area or anywhere else on the site?’

QUESTIONS – (there may be more than one correct answer)

		A	B	C
1	What will reduce the risk of damage to your hearing	Avoid areas of high noise level	Minimise exposure	Do nothing
2	If noise levels in your area are above 90dB(A), do you need to take action?	Yes	No	Sometime in the future
3	Is noise induced hearing loss permanent?	No	Yes	Sometimes
4	Does hearing protection need to be fitted correctly?	Yes, because my supervisor will pull me up if not	Yes - to give maximum designed protection	No - It doesn't really matter
5	Does hearing protection need to be kept clean?	No – I'll get some more from stores	Yes –to prevent the spread of disease	Yes – because I share it

