

# What do you mean by decibel level?

## Resources

What's too loud?  
How do you properly  
fit earplugs?  
Get noise/hearing  
protection answers,  
advice, and  
solutions at  
[saif.com/safety](https://saif.com/safety) or  
[saif.com/noise](https://saif.com/noise)

A decibel is the measurement we use when talking about the loudness of a sound. Here are some examples of common sounds and their decibel levels:

Typical conversation	60
Bulldozer idling	85
Train whistle at 500 feet	90
Power mower at three feet	107
Power saw at three feet	110
Loud rock concert	115
Pneumatic riveter at four feet	125
Jet engine at 100 feet; gun blast	140

## OSHA limits

OSHA regulations state that your employees must wear hearing protection if they are exposed to the following noise levels beyond the length of time listed:

Decibels	Time of exposure (in hours)
90	8
95	4
100	2
105	1
110	.5
115	.25

**Remember:** The louder the sound, the less time you can safely listen to it. Even the OSHA limits on the left may not be protective enough. In reality, for every **three** decibels over 85, the allowable time before damage can occur from long-term exposure is cut in half. Because of this potential for hearing loss, most health and safety organizations recommend wearing hearing protection whenever an eight-hour exposure to noise equals or exceeds **85 decibels**.

