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Noise Center

NOISE CENTER OF THE LEAGUE

1 888 NOISE 88

NOISE LEVELS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT FACT SHEET

How Loud is Too Loud? Experts agree that continued exposure to noise above 85 dBA over time, will cause hearing loss. To know if a sound is loud enough to damage your ears, it is important to know both the loudness level (measured in decibels, dBA) and the length of exposure to the sound. In general, the louder the noise, the less time required before hearing loss will occur. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1998), the maximum exposure time at 85 dBA is 8 hours. At 110 dBA, the maximum exposure time is one minute and 29 seconds. If you must be exposed to noise, it is recommended that you limit the exposure time and/or wear hearing protection.

Measure Up and Turn it Down: Decibel Levels Around Us The following are decibel levels of common noise sources around us. These are typical levels, however, actual noise levels may vary depending on the particular item. Remember noise levels above 85 dBA will harm hearing over time. Noise levels above 140dBA can cause damage to hearing after just one exposure.

Points of Reference *measured in dBA or decibels

- 0 The softest sound a person can hear with normal hearing
- 10 normal breathing
- 20 whispering at 5 feet
- 30 soft whisper

- 50 rainfall
- 60 normal conversation
- 110 shouting in ear
- 120 thunder

Work

Home

- 50 refrigerator
- 50 - 60 electric toothbrush
- 50 - 75 washing machine
- 50 - 75 air conditioner
- 50 - 80 electric shaver
- 55 coffee percolator
- 55 - 70 dishwasher
- 60 sewing machine
- 60 - 85 vacuum cleaner
- 60 - 95 hair dryer
- 65 - 80 alarm clock
- 70 TV audio
- 70 - 80 coffee grinder
- 70 - 95 garbage disposal
- 75 - 85 flush toilet
- 80 pop-up toaster
- 80 doorbell
- 40 quiet office, library
- 50 large office
- 65 - 95 power lawn mower
- 80 manual machine, tools
- 85 handsaw
- 90 tractor
- 90 - 115 subway
- 95 electric drill
- 100 factory machinery
- 100 woodworking class
- 105 snow blower
- 110 power saw
- 110 leafblower
- 120 chain saw, hammer on nail
- 120 pneumatic drills, heavy machine
- 120 jet plane (at ramp)
- 120 ambulance siren
- 125 chain saw

Recreation

- 40 quiet residential area
- 70 freeway traffic
- 85 heavy traffic, noisy restaurant
- 90 truck, shouted conversation
- 95 - 110 motorcycle
- 100 snowmobile
- 100 school dance, boom box
- 110 disco
- 110 busy video arcade
- 110 symphony concert
- 110 car horn
- 110 - 120 rock concert
- 112 personal cassette player on high
- 117 football game (stadium)
- 120 band concert
- 125 auto stereo (factory installed)

- 80 ringing telephone
- 80 whistling kettle
- 80 - 90 food mixer or processor
- 80 - 90 blender
- 80 - 95 garbage disposal
- 110 baby crying
- 110 squeaky toy held close to the ear
- 135 noisy squeeze toys
- 130 jackhammer, power drill
- 130 air raid
- 130 percussion section at symphony
- 140 airplane taking off
- 150 jet engine taking off
- 150 artillery fire at 500 feet
- 180 rocket launching from pad
- 130 stock [car](#) races
- 143 bicycle horn
- 150 firecracker
- 156 capgun
- 157 balloon pop
- 162 [fireworks](#) (at 3 feet)
- 163 rifle
- 166 handgun
- 170 shotgun

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