



Types of noise that damage hearing: #1 – Impulse Noise

- **Causes:** Repetitive impact created by such equipment as hammers, pneumatic nail guns, drill presses, etc.
- **Effect:** This kind of noise is insidious. Your ears tolerate it reasonably well because it isn't sustained. But it still can cause hearing loss over time.

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HEARING PROTECTION

When you're exposed to a regular noise that's intermittent rather than continuous, the tendency is to brush it off. It's not as though the noise is blaring in your ears all the time.

But even intermittent noise, if powerful enough, can cause hearing loss. That's what happened to the employee we'll talk about now.

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Rob was a crew chief for an industrial cleaning company. His crew was permanently assigned to clean a meat packing plant, using high-pressure water.

When Rob and his workers would train the hoses on the packing equipment, the impact of the water would create a roar that he compared to two freight trains passing at once. Rob would usually wear earmuffs, although he took them off many dozens of times a shift to communicate with crew members.

Anyway, the noise came in bursts, and usually didn't last long, so Rob thought little of it. That is, until the day he noticed that he couldn't understand people talking to him over the phone. When Rob went for a hearing test, he had lost a substantial portion of his hearing. Today, Rob has to read lips to communicate, and he avoids using the phone at all.

His employer had to pay more than \$30,000 in workers' comp benefits, and take care of all Rob's future medical expenses associated with his hearing loss.

(ask the participants)

What did Rob do wrong?

Correct answer: Rob should have worn earplugs, which were available, rather than just earmuffs, which weren't enough to shield his ears from the hazardous noise level. And as far as communicating with his crew went, a simple system of agreed-upon signs would have taken care of most of it.

(Rambo v. DCS Sanitation, Iowa Workers' Compensation Commissioner)