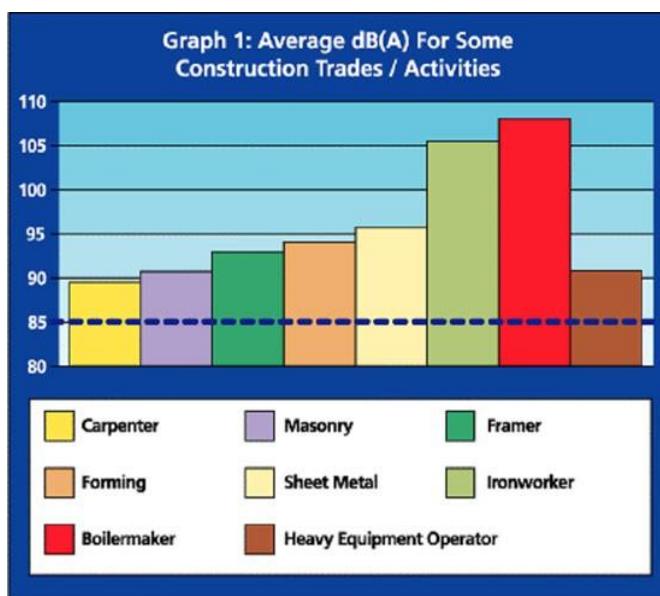


Tool Box Talk

Hearing Protection

According to Statistics Canada, "Of Canadians aged 16 to 79, 42% have worked or currently work in an environment where it is required to speak in a raised voice to communicate with someone standing an arm's length away. Among these individuals, 24% always used hearing protection, while 41% never did. The remaining 35% used hearing protection often, sometimes, or rarely."

Work Environments and Sound Hazards



Regulation 7-14, for exposure to noise, requires the provision and use of approved hearing protection that will reduce the noise levels to less than **85 dB(A)** (decibels).

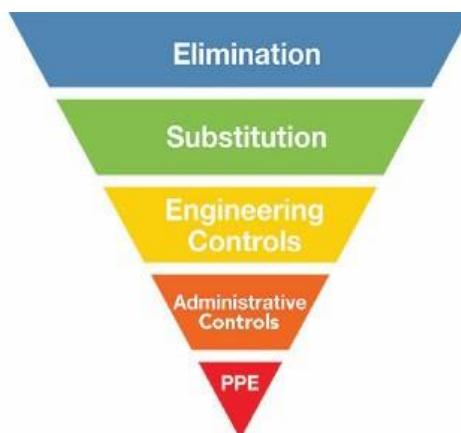
With so many sources of potential exposure in the workplace, what can we do?

Part 8 of the *Occupational Health & Safety Regulations, 2020* provides information and direction to employers and employees in the identification and control of noise in the workplace. This could include consultation with the occupational health committee (OHC) and further development of a hearing conservation plan as stated in regulation 8-6.

How Can We Protect Workers?

The first step would be to assess the hazard. This can range from small hand tools to large pieces of equipment or machinery.

Then look at it as you would with any other workplace hazard using the **Hierarchy of Controls**:



- As with all workplace hazards, our best option is to **eliminate** the hazard. This would include moving or enclosing a loud piece of equipment, such as compressors or generators.
- Moving down the hierarchy, you could utilize **substitution**. This would replace a loud tool or machine with one designed to generate less noise.
- If elimination and substitution are not options, maybe **engineering controls** can be implemented. An example of this would be installing a better muffler on a running piece of equipment.
- Another effective method would be to restrict or prohibit access using **administrative controls** to certain areas where the noise hazard is present.
- And finally, if you cannot do any of the above, select proper hearing protection. Use **PPE** such as foam earplugs or ear muffs. As with all PPE, it needs to be worn properly to be effective. This requires worker training.

When you implement controls, always follow up and evaluate their effectiveness.