Noise at Work Toolbox Talk

Key points, do's and don'ts, and questions with answers. The attendance sign-off sheet is on the last page.

Asked to show your toolbox talk records? The Site Book keeps each talk and its signatures with the job, on Pro: **thesitebook.co.uk/features/toolbox-talks**

Key points to cover

- Noise-induced hearing loss develops gradually and is permanent — you will not get your hearing back
- The lower exposure action value is 80 dB(A) daily — hearing protection must be made available
- The upper exposure action value is 85 dB(A) daily — hearing protection must be worn and hearing protection zones designated
- A rough guide: if you have to shout to be heard by someone 2 metres away, the noise level is probably above 85 dB(A)
- Reduce noise at source first — use quieter equipment, damping, enclosures, or barriers
- Tinnitus (ringing in the ears) is an early warning sign of hearing damage — report it

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Wear hearing protection in all designated hearing protection zones
- Check that your hearing protection fits properly and provides adequate attenuation for the noise level
- Report tinnitus or any change in hearing immediately
- Use quieter tools and methods wherever possible
- Keep hearing protection clean and replace worn ear plugs or damaged muffs

Don't

- Never remove hearing protection even briefly in a noisy area — even short unprotected exposure causes damage
- Never assume you are used to the noise — hearing loss is cumulative and painless until it is too late
- Never use damaged or dirty ear plugs — they will not provide proper protection
- Never listen to music through earbuds on site — it masks warning sounds and adds to noise exposure
- Never use cotton wool or tissue as makeshift hearing protection — it does not work

Questions to check understanding

Ask each question and let the crew answer before you read out the answer.

Q1. At what noise level must hearing protection be provided?

Answer: Hearing protection must be made available on request once daily noise exposure reaches 80 dB(A) or peak noise reaches 135 dB(C) (the lower exposure action values). It must be provided and worn once daily exposure reaches 85 dB(A) or peak noise reaches 137 dB(C) (the upper exposure action values).

Q2. How can you tell if noise levels are likely above 85 dB(A) without a meter?

Answer: If you have to shout to be heard by someone about 2 metres away, the noise level is probably at or above 85 dB(A).

Q3. Is noise-induced hearing loss reversible?

Answer: No. Once the hair cells in the inner ear are damaged by excessive noise, they do not regenerate. The hearing loss is permanent.

Q4. Name two ways to reduce noise exposure on site besides wearing ear protection.

Answer: Use quieter tools or methods (e.g. hydraulic breakers instead of pneumatic), enclose noisy equipment, use barriers, schedule noisy work for times when fewer workers are nearby, and rotate workers to limit individual exposure time.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Noise at Work Toolbox Talk

Everyone who attended prints their name and signs to confirm they received this talk.

Date _____ **Time** _____

Site or location _____ **Presented by** _____

No.	Name (print)	Company	Signature
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Presenter's signature _____

This is general guidance for UK construction sites. Check it against your own risk assessment, method statement and the site before you deliver it. Toolbox talk from The Site Book, reviewed 26 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/noise.