



Noise Exposure Action Levels

What OSHA requires at each 8-hour time-weighted average — from the action level to the permissible limit.

ANY VALUE

Measured as an 8-hour TWA

Action levels are based on an 8-hour time-weighted average. Higher noise levels reach the same dose in far less time — a 5 dBA increase halves the allowed exposure time.

100 dBA

2-hour exposure limit

At 100 dBA the permissible dose is reached in just 2 hours. Treat sustained exposure here as a stop-and-control trigger, not a tolerate-with-PPE situation.

Table G-16

90 dBA

Permissible exposure limit (PEL)

At a TWA of 90 dBA, feasible engineering or administrative controls must be used to bring exposure down. Hearing protection covers what controls cannot.

1910.95(b)(1)

85 dBA

Action level — enroll in hearing conservation

At an 8-hour TWA of 85 dBA, the employer must establish a hearing conservation program: baseline and annual audiograms, training, and hearing protector availability.

1910.95(c)

STANDARD THRESHOLD SHIFT

An annual audiogram showing a 10 dB average shift at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz is a recordable Standard Threshold Shift — fit-check protection, retrain, and re-evaluate controls.

1910.95(g)(10)