

# Now Hear This

## Three Steps Toward Protecting Young Ears

(NAPSA)—According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as many as 16 percent of teens have reported hearing loss possibly caused by loud noise—but you can reduce the risk for the kids you care about.

### The Problem

Many young people get summer or afterschool jobs that involve farm work, construction, landscaping or theme parks, all of which can damage hearing. Prolonged exposure to high-noise volumes or even short exposures to high-level impulse sound can damage sensitive structures in the inner ear and cause noise-induced hearing loss and/or ringing in the ears.

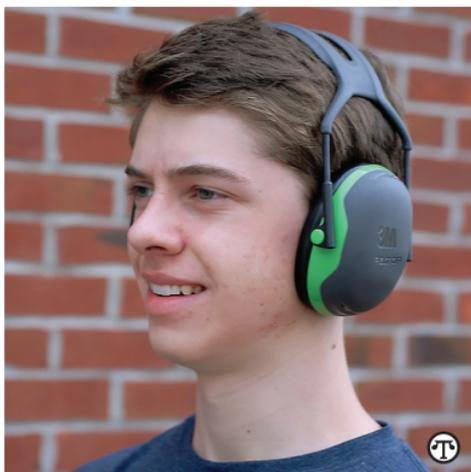
### Some Solutions

“Young employees may need guidance to be safe from hazardous noise,” said Dr. Laurie Wells, audiologist, and senior acoustics regulatory affairs specialist for 3M. Here’s how:

**Step 1: Recognize the Hazard.** Too few children and parents realize the hazards of excessive noise, perhaps because school programs don’t typically cover hearing health. The risk is real and increases depending on the combination of the sound level and the duration of exposure. A general guideline is: If you have to shout for someone to hear you at arm’s length, the sound could be hazardous.

**Step 2: Take Action.** Fortunately, young workers can reduce the negative effects of noise exposure. When possible, reduce the noise at its source. This can be as easy as turning down the volume, keeping equipment regularly maintained or using a quieter tool in place of a louder one. Secondly, move away from the noise when you can.

If this isn’t feasible, use hearing protection devices. Employers are obliged to provide appropriate hearing protection to workers in hazardous noise environments.



**The louder the noise, the less time a person can safely listen to it before risking hearing damage.**

Inexpensive foam earplugs can actually provide the most noise reduction and be the most comfortable if fit and used correctly. Specially designed hearing protectors such as those containing electronics are available for unique environments. Even some earmuffs use wireless signal transmission that lets workers enjoy a personal listening device or use a mobile phone while maintaining protection from noise.

Regardless of which option employers or individuals choose, using hearing protection sometimes requires practice for maximum benefit and comfort.

**Step 3: Know Your Rights.** Young workers should expect a choice of suitable hearing protectors, provided at no cost to them, and to be trained in their proper use.

Being aware of noise sources, having appropriately selected and fitted protective devices, and using them correctly will help preserve a young person’s hearing for many years to come.

### Further Facts

To encourage people to protect their hearing, 3M has launched the Hearing Pledge. Go to [www.hearingpledge.com](http://www.hearingpledge.com) to learn more about hearing, noise, and hearing protection.